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Vol. LXXIII

JANUARY, 1924

No. 1

Contents

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| THE VISIT | Roda Roda | 7 |
| RHYMER'S REASON; OLD STYLE | Basil Thompson | 8 |
| THE WINGED SEED (<i>a complete novelette</i>) | Richmond Brooks Barrett | 9 |
| THE TEST | Logan Trumbull | 37 |
| JETTA GOUDAL, A PORTRAIT | Adrian | 38 |
| THE GIRL WHO WAS ALWAYS A STAR | Joel Harkness | 39 |
| YO-HO-HO AND A BOTTLE OF RUM | Marjorie Stoneman Douglas | 43 |
| THE VOICE OF URRACA | Linton Reynolds Massey | 55 |
| THE APOTHECARY | Fairfax Downey | 59 |
| IT IS A STRANGE THING | Harold Lewis Cook | 59 |
| THE IDLE SINGER | Dick Ham | 60 |
| JIST A LITTLE ONION | Art Smith | 68 |
| MATTERS OF FACT | Sterling Beeson | 69 |
| HOMO SAP | Jay Jarrod | 74 |
| CHAMELEON | Nancy Hoyt | 75 |
| SIX OF THEM | Myrtle Meyer Eldred | 83 |
| SWEET GRAPES | Charles G. Shaw | 88 |
| PARTING | Helen Constance Pitt | 91 |
| THE WITCH OF ERIVAN | Ellis O. Briggs | 92 |
| MOGGS | Alexander Hull | 103 |
| I AM THE SEA | Mary Carolyn Davies | 109 |
| THE AD SECTION | Nunnally Johnson | 110 |
| THE HERO | Katherine Knox | 115 |
| A CERTAIN SOMETHING PRECIOUS | Burton Kline | 117 |
| BROTHERHOOD | Reese Reeds | 127 |

And Various Burlesques, Epigrams, Poems, Etc.

Manuscripts must be addressed, "Editor of THE SMART SET"

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.00

SINGLE COPIES 20 CENTS

Issued Monthly by the Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York, N. Y.

Entered as second class matter, March 27, 1900, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879

Printed in U. S. A.

Eltinge F. Warner, President and Treasurer

Arthur W. Sutton, Secretary

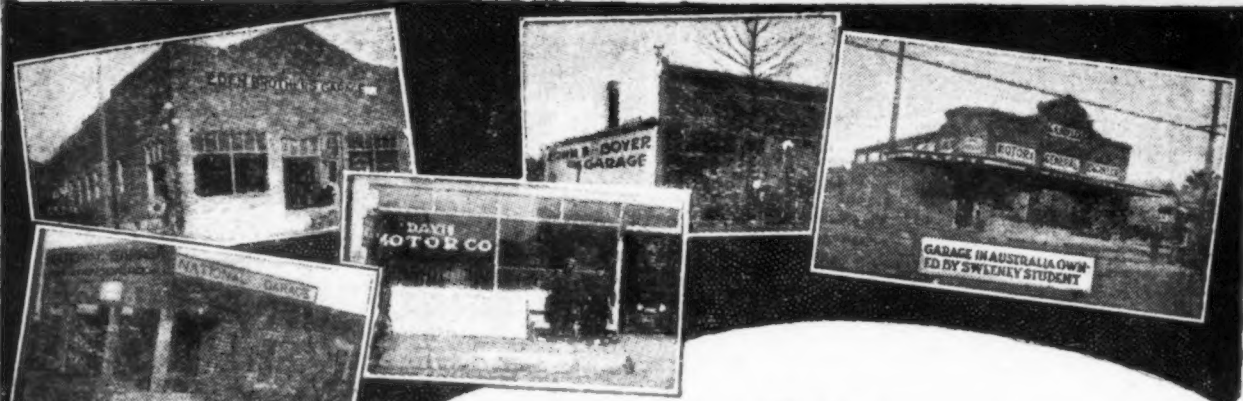
The Smart Set is published in England at 265, Strand, London, W. C. 2.

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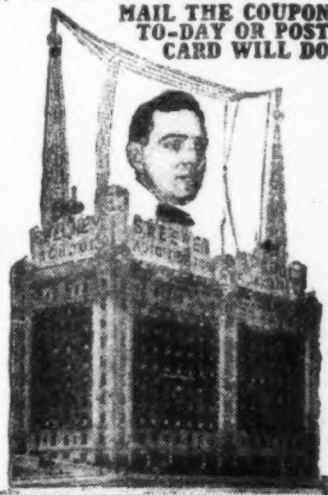
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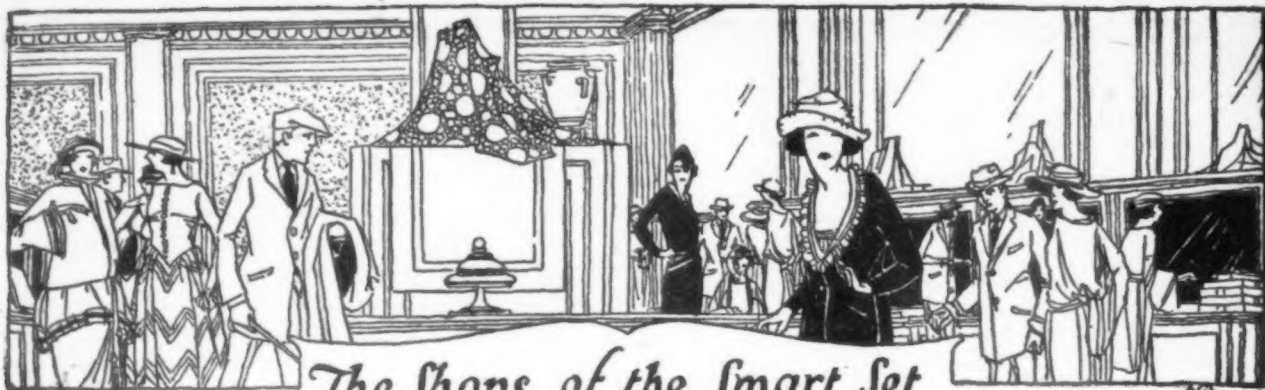
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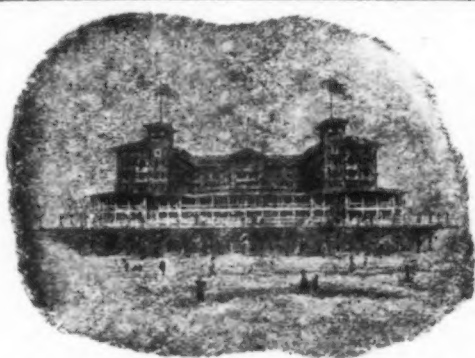
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*Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!*
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman, has been solved. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" of financial success. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—success and happiness in love and marriage—and there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of science and its value has been proved. It "works." And because it does work—surely, speedily and most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in many years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from lives of disappointment and misery.

The peculiar value of this discovery is that it removes physical handicaps which, in the past, have been considered inevitable and irremediable. I refer to the loss of youthful animation and a waning of the vital forces. These difficulties have caused untold unhappiness—failures, shattered romances, mysterious divorces. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization rapidly depletes the organism and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime. But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet voiced



humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of youth too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verses, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search—without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth," an infallible method of renewing energy lost or depleted by disease, overwork, worry, excesses or advancing age.

Now the long search has been rewarded. A "fountain of youth" has been found! Science announces unconditionally that youthful vigor can be restored quickly and safely. Lives clouded by weakness can be illuminated by the sunlight of health and joy. Old age, in a sense, can be kept at bay and youth made more glorious than ever. And the discovery which makes these amazing results possible is something any man or woman, young or old, can easily use in the privacy of the home.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has given most remarkable results in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years and has caused unbounded amazement by its quick, harmless, gratifying action. Now, in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, it is available to the general public.

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January

The SMART SET



The Visit

By Roda Roda

MADAME CHARITY lay on her luxurious couch. At her head a many-colored parrot preened himself on his glistening stand. At her feet a velvety Pekingese played with tasseled cushions. Madame Charity was wealthy and loved animals.

Her maid, bringing a card on silver tray, announced the visit of Mrs. Gratitude.

A poorly dressed woman in rusty black entered, leading her little boy by the hand. Even at the threshold she began to curtsy and bow and smirk, for Mrs. Gratitude felt reverence for wealth.

Madame Charity, with patronizing gesture, invited her to take a seat, then, resignedly, let the usual flood of praise rush upon her. All the while, however, she could not take her eyes off the little boy with his treacherous smile.

Finally Mrs. Gratitude had finished. Devoutly she kissed Madame Charity's bejewelled fingers, took her little boy by the hand, and turned to go.

But Madame Charity, wishing to be especially amiable, stopped her once more. "What a dear little boy," she drawled, condescendingly, "is he your only child?"

"Yes, gracious Madame."

"Indeed. And what is his name?"

"Hate!" cried Mrs. Gratitude, and her eyes glittered with pride.



Rhymer's Reason: Old Style

By Basil Thompson

I SHOULD rather rhyme, I think,
Than clip a girl or down a drink;
Wenches and wassail are well enough
But a stout rhyme is headier stuff.
Sure, I should rather a rollicking rhyme
Than wenches and liquor any time,
Though both of them I've got and tasted
And many moons and moods have wasted
Bussing the one and swilling the other—
Is there a man of us hasn't, brother?
Still, I should rather squander my time
Fashioning wenches out of rhyme,
And I should rather brew my drink
With a theme and a pen and a bottle of ink.
Bumpers and buxom chits may mellow
But rhyme's the stuff for a heady fellow.

To ninnies and babes the lip and the nipple,
To the old lout a swig and a tippie.
To heady fellows of middle time
A rollicking theme and a stout rhyme.



The Aristocrat

By Noel Coventry

THE door burst open and in crashed a superb creature. Tall, a bit heavy, beautifully gowned. Her eyes flashed and her nostrils quivered with rage. She thrust out one arm. She cried in a husky voice—
"You lied to me! That soap was perfumed!"



The Wingèd Seed

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

CHAPTER I

FLORA WILDER had always made a confidant of Robert Steele. Even when she was a child she had seemed to realize that her father's irreproachable cousin represented her one point of connection with ordinary established life. Only in her talks with him did she feel as if her feet had actual solid ground beneath them. She had seen him in many places, in New York, in London and Florence; but a man of Steele's innate thoroughness had none of the wanderer's traits. For him, traveling was never an end in itself. He did not rove. Rather, he dug himself out of one place by the roots only to plant himself firmly and painstakingly in another soil. He settled down, with all his personal effects; he became in a short time acclimatized and, embedded in his new earth-plot, drew in sustenance, even underwent a racial change. To Flora, whose experience had embraced every conceivable variety of hotel but nothing remotely resembling a home, Robert Steele's little apartment had had an irresistible appeal.

"You don't know how lonesome I feel when I'm here," she had told him once. "It gives me a funny sensation somewhere in my stomach—just as if I was hungry."

Flora had been born an outcast from the human circle, as much an outsider as if she had been a native of some distant planet. The child of Frederick and Carlotta Wilder could not be expected to put forth any grappling ten-

drils to stay her headlong course; like a little wingèd seed, she had been whirled over the surface of the earth by the bleak winds of chance. If in her makeup there had been any germs of fertility, they must early have been rendered barren, so Steele often reflected. Her queer, sad yearning, in presence of his own domesticity, he put down as a tragic heritage from some dependable ancestor—an ancestor who had bequeathed that strain to Steele himself along with the power to enjoy it. In poor Flora's case, such a trait could act only as a futile ache. With her sorry equipment, it was no better than one of the useless physical organs left to rankle inside the body after evolutionary changes have made them obsolete.

Steele was never surprised at Flora's sudden unannounced appearances. No matter where one might be, the Wilders were apt to appear without warning, alight restlessly and then abruptly vanish. Often Flora arrived in company of only a nurse or governess; it was characteristic of her parents to leave her along the line of march like so much superfluous luggage, while they pressed on to some gay new adventure. Flora accepted philosophically this periodical desertion. She had learned at an early age that people who were always together got on each other's nerves.

At times, indeed, her mother and father strayed off in opposite directions. Flora, left to the guidance of the newest Mademoiselle or Fräulein, would calmly amuse herself in exploring the mysteries of the particular city

or village where she had been dropped, and would wait without concern until her parents had grown tired of following their separate gleams. Usually the mother, less patient than her husband, returned first, with the father reporting a week or two later. Flora, wiser at twelve than Robert Steele at forty-five, had no illusions; once, paying him a call at Siena, she had announced, "Papa's gone off somewhere with some woman. Mama's in Paris, having her portrait painted by a nice young man she got acquainted with here."

Flora, in Steele's library, liked to sit on the floor and run a caressing hand, palm-downward, over the dark old seaweed-colored rug. When she was still only a little girl, she would insist on preparing the tea herself; conversing gravely on most sophisticated topics, she would examine with a loving intensity the distorted image of her small face in his venerable tea-caddy, or, lifting up a fragile china cup, would hold it off from her and watch the light filter cloudily through it. His books fascinated her; she would stand in front of them and rub their worn, polished backs. She patted his gleaming chairs, acted toward every piece of his furniture as if she obtained a sentient response from it.

For his magnificent old yellow cat, Tamerlane, she had an almost feverish affection. She would kneel before his special chair and bury her face in his fur. "I love to feel him breathe; I love to squeeze his paws!" she would murmur, and, shutting her teeth tight, would give him a strangling hug. The mauled animal, after a long-drawn, unheeded growl, usually fetched her a blow on the nose. When Tamerlane's ire was roused, he could be counted on to unsheathe his claws and draw blood. The scratches wounded Flora's feelings; she was abnormally sensitive to rebuffs. How this quality of shrinking delicacy could have survived the child's years of battering sordid impacts Steele was at a loss to understand. A slap from Tamerlane made of her a perfect image of disconsolate tragedy;

but for all that, she never learned to keep a wary distance from the intolerant pet.

When Flora was seventeen her parents, after installing her in a hotel at Rome for the trying winter months, took ship themselves for Egypt. Half-way across, their steamer was ripped asunder in a collision and they lost their romantic, improvident lives. To be swirled about in green depths to all eternity, with their lungs full of the water of the glorious old Mediterranean—the Wilders couldn't have asked a more exquisitely appropriate fate.

Meanwhile, there was Flora alone with her grief in Rome, the coldest, cruelest spot imaginable.

Steele, who had been living for the past year in London, departed for Italy on the day he read the news of the wreck. He had no intention of condoling with Flora; it was up to him to make the meeting quite casual. He realized that, despite her helplessness and sorrow, she would resent anything like an officious intrusion. She needed someone in whom she could confide; once he convinced her that he had not come merely to go through the conventional polite forms of sympathy, he had no doubt he could be of genuine help. Steele had every reason to consider himself the man for this particular emergency. Flora had long ago appointed him a sort of guardian; she had even dubbed him, with humorous scorn, "Godfather." Of course he had no legitimate right to this title; Mr. and Mrs. Wilder had never felt that their duty to their child included a formal baptism in the Christian faith.

Steele, during his journey across the continent, felt more and more that the strange man-to-man friendship between himself and this seventeen-year-old child had somehow been destined solely as a source of strength in today's crisis.

Her greeting to him was quite in accordance with his anticipations. Opening the door of her gloomy sitting-room, she had examined him sharply for a brief moment, then had given a commendatory nod at his matter-of-fact

air. "You *are* a dear, Robert!" she confessed as she raised herself up on her toes and drew his head down to hers. "I knew you'd come—just like this." She gave him a grateful kiss. "Do come over here to the fire, Robert!" she went on, the grave, painstaking hostess. "We'll have some tea—some awful Italian hotel tea."

Shutting the door after him, he walked obediently over to the fire and held out his hands to the blaze. "They received me with the most elaborate ceremony downstairs," he remarked over his shoulder.

Flora smiled at this neat opening on his part. "Of course," she said, "they would. They've all been kind, awfully kind. But they get on my nerves. I'm so glad you've come, Robert."

"Rome's such a beastly place to be alone in—when you've got problems to tackle." He bent closer to the logs, his back squarely presented to her. "It occurred to me, Flora, that two heads might be better than one, you know."

She was silent.

Steele, straightening up at length and turning away from the fire, noticed that she had begun to busy herself with the cups and saucers on her tea-table.

"Let's carry the table over here—in front of the fireplace," he suggested. "It will be cozier."

He took a step forward; then, realizing that her hands made mere blind fumbling movements among the china dishes, he paused.

All at once, she faced about. In that moment, Steele knew that his scrupulously delicate policy had once for all conquered her doubts, her queer, proud reticence. She stood there before him and, with a certain fierceness, she let him see to the full her pitiful plight.

Against the background of the great dark hotel room, she made a tiny figure of inexpressibly bitter sadness and loneliness. The fact that her grief sharpened and hardened her pretty face gave her, for the man, an added poignancy; it made him see her, more keenly than ever before, as a sort of street-Arab. Her expensive

black frock, the decaying, mildewed splendor of her surroundings, could not disguise her essential quality—that of the waif. She was as much the beggarly little street-prowler as if, in picturesque rags, she were holding up to him a tin cup for his pennies. It was her expression that stamped her—the look of starved cunning, of sagacity, almost of age. A tragedy might have a softening influence on the commonplace protected girl; but Flora, evidently schooled to expect it, had met it in a cynical disillusion. Before the quiet, agonized pity of Steele, however, she had suddenly found her grief, as separated from her mere defiance of her lot; and her eyes, level in his, began to glitter with tears.

"I can't give you your tea—yet," she faltered. "I'm going to cry—first—if you don't mind."

"Yes—that's best, Flora." Smiling his encouragement, he held out his arms.

"Thanks—thanks!" She tumbled into his embrace and he felt her shaken with harsh, dry sobs.

CHAPTER II

"I REALLY think it'll have to be Aunt Addie. Yes, it's got to be Aunt Addie." Flora, her elbows on the tea-table and her fingers thrust through her curly hair, nodded gravely into the fire. "Of course the combination of Aunt Addie and myself can't last. That's obvious, isn't it?" She called upon Steele's common sense to back her up in her assertion.

"You would make a peculiar pair—that's obvious, at any rate," he conceded. "But your aunt's an admirable woman in her way."

"Oh, but don't I know she's 'admirable'!" Flora spoke with an abrupt scorn. "And decent." She shook her head suspiciously. "*Altogether* too decent!"

Steele, amused, followed up this reasoning in his own way. "Too decent to understand a funny little nomad who's studied the wickedness of every land?"

"That's not my idea at all," Flora contradicted him. "When I say my aunt's decent, I mean she's just plain smug. She's a hypocrite, Robert."

"Now, my dear Flora!" Steele was half stern. "If you're going to accept her offer in that spirit, naturally the relation can't last."

"Do you think for a single minute that she intends it to last?" Flora confronted him now somewhat in the manner of a prosecuting attorney.

"I do," he returned with an unsuccessful attempt to make the words sound firm and convincing.

"Then you're very much of a fool; you really don't know anything about human nature." After dealing him out this smart snub she gave him an indulgent smile and condescended to explain away his ignorance. "Aunt Addie will take charge of me just so people won't talk; she's got to live up to her reputation as a charitable woman."

"And how, my dear child, do you know all her charitable motives are a pretense?" Steele asked, his tone of irony so faint at present as to be hardly noticeable. Flora's cool logic had begun to impress him.

"I know it just by looking at her and by hearing her speak a dozen words." Flora was prompt. "Aunt Addie will get me over to London and then she'll marry me to the first man she can coax into asking for me."

"She'll *try* to marry you, that is," Steele gently amended.

Flora gave a decisive headshake. "No, she'll pull it off. You see, she realizes that in six months I'll jump at any chance to escape from her. Oh, *I know* my Aunt Addie, Robert."

"But you admit she's desperately correct and formal." Steele reminded her. "Doesn't that falsify the rest of your picture?"

"How?" She was brusque.

"Well, that sort of woman isn't going to marry off a girl who's in mourning and who's too young even to be presented." This argument struck him as profound; but Flora had met it without hesitation.

"Aunt Addie'd love to act according to the rules—I don't deny it," she said. "If she could take me in hand and make me over, she wouldn't mind how many years it required. The point is, I'm set for all time. I can't be tinkered with or repaired. So she'll simply have to get rid of me while I'm still more or less of a novelty."

They were silent for a time. Flora, watching Steele shrewdly, was letting him weigh her words. Then, "Do you get what I mean?" she asked sharply.

"I suppose so—yes, I suppose so," he grudgingly confessed.

During the short pause, he had been going back over all his previous encounters with her; and at last he had been forced to acknowledge that, in the past decade, there had somehow been no slightest change in her. She would always be the elfin, precocious child; by premature forcing she had arrived at her fullest development at a time when properly her consciousness should have been still dormant. She was like a fruit off some twisted, scrubby tree in the wilds, shaped too early by a rigorous climate. The most laborious ripening process could never soften or mellow her. It was true that her aunt would be unable to effect any improvement. Flora must be exhibited as a curiosity, offered up as a toughened little windfall with a hard green rind and an astringent though possibly stimulating taste. For the sake of Adelaide Wilder, it was to be hoped the girl might appeal as an acrid sort of tonic to some man's jaded appetite.

Steele had always worried about Flora's manners and education. Judged by his own finicky, correct standards, she was both crude and ignorant. She could discourse at a breathless speed in several European languages; since, however, her knowledge had been gained for the most part from conversation and haphazard reading, the fine points of diction had consistently escaped her. She had written many letters to Steele—and in many languages. Unfortunately, even her English effusions had been marred by gross errors

in spelling and grammar. As for punctuation—either she shamelessly ignored it or (and this was quite possible) she had never been told that it was a vital part of one's cultural equipment.

Flora, after she had lighted a cigarette, suddenly announced, "Oh, yes—I know I'm gauche and rude and all the rest of it, Robert." She had been reading Steele's thoughts with uncanny accuracy. "I'm not middle-class, though, thank God! Aunt Addie's got money and a fairly decent position in England; but she's no more the genuine article than if she was a green-grocer's widow." There was no note of boastfulness in her statement; she was merely giving her companion incontrovertible truths. "Now *you* have everything, Robert," she pursued. "And Uncle Johnathan had, too; what ever possessed him to marry Aunt Addie?"

"Your Uncle Johnathan happened to fall in love—that's all," Steele elucidated.

"I suppose she was beautiful," Flora mused aloud. "And I'm sure she put on fifty pounds the first year."

"At least fifty," Steele laughingly agreed.

"Well, I'm glad she's only a relative by marriage." Crossing her legs and resting her head against the back of her chair, she blew a straight jet of smoke out of her lungs. "Why is it, Robert," she asked at length with the most intense earnestness, "that I, of all people, should want sometimes to settle down?"

"It's only natural," he told her, "when you've never had a home, to want one like the devil."

"Like the devil," she echoed with fervor. "What I can't make out is whether I *could* have a home. Mama and Papa couldn't; it wasn't in them." She pointed to the china and silver on the table. "Look at these things now. I've been years collecting them. If you only knew the pains I've taken. I love every cup and saucer. Wherever we've gone, I've unpacked these first. They're my home, Robert."

"They're very beautiful, too—yes, they're absolutely the genuine thing."

As he bent over her treasures, touching and testing them one by one, his expression of authentic appreciation brought a childish sparkle of joy into her eyes.

"Look here, Flora." He drew his chair closer to the table. "I have an idea." His face had taken on a tempered glow of enthusiasm. "Why not simply refuse your aunt's offer and get a little apartment somewhere—with one of your old governesses as chaperon? *Make* a home for yourself, furnish it slowly—piece by piece. Do as I've done, in other words."

"And how much money would I need?" Just for that moment, her eagerness seemed to match his own.

"Oh, you'll have more than ample—much more," he assured her. "A thousand pounds a year would do it. Skimping's part of the game, Flora."

"I doubt if I'll have anything like a thousand a year." Even before he finished speaking, her elation had dropped. Her mouth had thinned to a straight line and her eyes were full of a calculating shrewdness. "You see, Robert, this season in Egypt was going to be a last suicidal splurge. A few hundred will be the most I can expect. Anyhow, your scheme's out of the question. No matter how much I dislike Aunt Addie, she's the one solution."

"You'd rather marry the first man than work out your own destiny?" Steele's voice had at present an edged sharpness.

"Work out my own destiny!" she mocked him in humorous disgust. "You don't know what you're talking about, Robert. A girl like me is done for, if she's single at nineteen."

"But, my dear Flora," Steele impatiently protested, "I don't see that having your own place would make a spinster out of you. You'd meet more men there than you'd ever meet at your aunt's."

"Yes, indeed—I'd meet enough and to spare." She granted that. "But do you suppose they'd be the marrying kind?" Leaning forward impulsively across the table, she caught hold of his

hand. "You're very sweet and kind, Robert dear," she said, "and you think much too highly of me. I'm rather a bad lot, you know; I've got horrid evil traits that you couldn't understand in a hundred years. I tell you as a solemn fact that, if I lived alone, I'd be lost in no time. And it wouldn't be the men's fault, either." She took a last lingering draw at her cigarette, then tossed the butt into the fire.

"So it's your idea that your aunt's choice—somebody you won't care a rap about—will save the day?" Steele challenged her.

"He may, he may!" She nervously pressed his hand tighter. "My one salvation is to fall in love with Aunt Addie's choice. I've got to *make* myself fall in love with him—that's all there is to it."

The tremendous force of her determination, communicating itself to the hand that clasped his, for the moment convinced Steele. He had all at once forgotten his irritation. To reassure her, to indicate his reliance on her indomitable will—that alone had become his wish. He got up from his chair and, while she continued to cling to one of his hands, with the other he gently, solicitously smoothed down her curly hair.

"If you've made up that queer mind of yours," he murmured, "you'll fall for him—and fall hard. Don't worry about that, Flora."

Her black eyes were peering up intently into his. "Well," she decided, "I'll try not to worry, anyhow."

Steele, too, wondered just then whether love itself, for a child with Flora's inheritance, could effect any lasting security.

CHAPTER III

A FORTNIGHT later, in London, Steele dined at Mrs. Johnathan Wilder's house with the good lady and her niece. He had had a few moments alone with Flora before his hostess made her gracious and archly effusive entrance upon the scene.

Flora, who had been watching out

for him at the drawing-room door, beckoned him unceremoniously to her side. "Well, here I am, Robert," she announced as they shook hands. "And it's worse, much worse, than I expected. I can't get over the idea that I've landed in a third-rate *pension*. Aunt Addie's to perfection the kittenish landlady. And just look at this drawing-room," she plaintively appealed to him. "Some rainy day I'm going to count the tassels on the furniture; there must be several thousand of them."

"It's a typical London interior, my dear," he reminded her after a cursory glance of inspection. "It's really not half so bad as you make out."

"No?" She sank down wearily on an immense stuffed divan. "I suppose it's comfortable; but God knows it's ugly. You must admit—"

"Never mind about the house," he interrupted her. "I want to know how you and your Aunt Adelaide are getting on."

"I told you, in Rome, what to expect," she returned.

"You were determined to hate *her*, at any rate, I remember," he gently rebuked her.

"Are you planning to take her side against me?" she asked.

"Of course not!" he exclaimed. "But I expect to hear some reasonable grounds for your complaint."

"She's sweet to me—oh, so sweet—in public. You'll see for yourself tonight." She ground her teeth dramatically in anticipation of the coming ordeal.

"And in private she's beastly?" he proffered.

"I'm afraid you'll never understand Aunt Addie." She gave a resigned shrug. "In private, Robert, she's sweeter still. She's a martyr every minute of the day. She hasn't mentality enough for sarcasm; she's too dull to be openly nasty. She just provokes me—and then, when I do get mad, she calls Heaven to witness that she's blameless."

Standing above her, with his arms crossed, Steele shook his perplexed

head. "It won't last even six months," he reflected.

"She's found a man, by the way," Flora remarked. "He's rather more than fifty per cent Jewish—otherwise he'd *never* have been decent to her."

"Upon my word!" He spoke now with a certain heat. "That's overstepping the mark. What's the woman *thinking* of, in God's name?"

"Oh, but I have no prejudice against him either." Flora was airily casual. "He's quite a *parti*—he's attractive and clever and he's very rich. He brings out the best in me. I wouldn't hesitate a minute if I wasn't afraid he might end by bringing out the worst."

"What scandalous rot—from a child your age!" he burst out, his face expressing revulsion, almost horror.

Flora only smiled. "I hear Aunt Addie on the stairs—gliding down. She never walks, you know. She'll tell you more about Anthony Bannermann, don't worry."

"Ah!" Mrs. Johnathan Wilder, appearing on the threshold, raised her eyebrows as if in pleased surprise.

Flora, from her divan, queried drily, "Why do you say 'Ah!' Aunt Addie? You knew he was coming to dinner tonight."

Mrs. Wilder ignored this pointed comment on her methods. With both plump white arms extended, she swept up to Steele. "I hope, at this dull time of year, you won't mind a quiet evening with just the child and myself," she murmured, her lips pursed as tightly as if they had been drawn together by the pull of an invisible string.

Since her heavily ringed hands were at present poised in delicate invitation right under his nose, the man took them and, bowing perfunctorily, went through the expected formality of kissing the fingers.

"Poor little Flora," Mrs. Wilder pursued, lowering her eyes to the floor at his half-hearted salute, "poor little Flora would be so at sea without you. You are her North Star; you have always directed her troubled course."

She sighed and dropped her arms at her sides.

Flora, who had drawn her feet up off the floor and was nursing her chin on her knees, paid no attention to this exchange. She looked straight ahead at the opposite wall and whistled a shrill tune.

"We're very good friends, Flora and I." Steele, hot and uncomfortable under his hostess's high-flown flattery, turned an appealing glance on the girl. "But really, you know, in a crisis she'd think me the *last* one to give her any help."

Flora went on with her unconcerned whistling. She had delivered him up to her relative; he must fight his way unaided out of her sentimental coils.

Mrs. Wilder shook her head with a ponderous coquetry. "Oh—but you can't hoodwink me by your modesty," she scolded Steele. "I know the whole beautiful story. Didn't I find you at Rome before me? If that was not devotion, how *shall* one describe poor lag-gard me?"

"I don't deny my interest." He had stiffened now to the point of rigidity. "But Flora knows too much of the world ever to take my advice."

"In some ways, the child *is* wise," her aunt admitted; "and then again she's only a homesick baby."

To Steele, Mrs. Wilder had within the last few minutes become a perplexing study. For over twenty years he had encountered her occasionally and had, each time, set her down as tedious, fatuously self-satisfied but well-meaning to a degree. Because of his belief in her kind-heartedness, he had been indulgent of her gross lapses from good taste, of her heavy attempts at playfulness. Under Flora's shrewd tuition, however, he had found his passive acceptance of Mrs. Wilder giving way to an active critical interpretation. Already, this evening, he felt a fuming dislike for the tawdry, tarnished widow. She had always dressed with a sort of pseudo-Venetian splendor, like a figure in tableaux vivants. The stuff of her gowns was usually velvet, of plum-

color or rose. It was possible that she paid a good deal for her clothes; but somehow they seemed cheap imitations, in material and dye, of the costumes worn by the women in famous paintings. They should have been seen at a distance and behind footlights. Tonight she wore black, in deference to Flora's dead parents; but the length of the train, the extravagant cut of the angel sleeves slipped back with studied negligence almost to the shoulders, gave the characteristic note of staginess even to her mourning.

Steele had come in contact with many admirable women—for the most part daughters of celebrated artists or diplomats—who decked themselves in outlandish fashion; these bizarre vagaries had in every case struck him as pathetic. He had till now found a place for Mrs. Wilder in the fantastically mistaken company. Though she lacked the distinction of character possessed by these descendants of great men, he had thought she belonged with them by reason of her public spirit: it was the mark of charitable women, this fulsome bad taste in clothes. But he realized at present that her particular style of fancy-dress was the result, not of an artistically disordered mind but of a vulgar calculation. She had commanding height; and her method of walking with quick, short steps floated her large bulk along with an effect of buoyancy. Her face, though the years had buffeted it out of shape and ever-increasing stoutness had submerged every vestige of bone-structure, retained a childish plaintive prettiness. It struck Steele with a certain disgust that she still might be described, by some men, as handsome, and that it was to them she catered.

Steele had really never seen Mrs. Wilder till now; no one had ever seen her, apparently. Flora was the pioneer in the field of her Aunt Addie's character. "Do you know, I often wonder whether she doesn't have lovers," Flora announced to Steele later, during one of their discussions about the good lady. "I've never seen any evidence of it. But

if she is respectable, she's missed her vocation, Robert. The best word to describe my aunt is *loose*." With tonight's scrutiny in his mind, Steele had nodded a complete agreement.

Flora had warned him that her aunt would find a way to introduce into the conversation her charming young Jewish acquisition. Indeed, they had hardly started on their soup when Mrs. Wilder's hand, in the act of conveying her spoon to her mouth, suddenly stayed itself in mid-air; she was gazing, in deep tenderness, at Flora and had become all at once bemused, forgetful of the actual business of eating. The girl herself went on consuming her soup with gusto and despatch.

"Everyone has been so kind—exquisite!" Mrs. Wilder murmured, her spoon still suspended. "Of course, it is difficult to find ways of entertaining a child in mourning. But you, for example—you have been splendid, Robert. And Mr. Bannermann, also." Having achieved the mention of Mr. Bannermann, she withdrew her glance from her niece and drank her spoonful of soup.

Flora, pushing her empty plate away, gave Steele a brisk nod.

"Yes—I've heard of Mr. Bannermann," Steele said.

Mrs. Wilder smiled at the recollection of Mr. Bannermann's kindness and waited for a leading question from her guest. He remained, however, silent. She cleared her throat expectantly and her smile grew mysterious. Still she obtained no response; so she was forced to vouchsafe her information unasked.

"Mr. Bannermann and Flora have so much in common." Half-closing her heavy eyelids, she indulged in a reminiscent pause. "Art, music, plays!" she resumed, with a wondering headshake. "You should hear them. Chatter, chatter, chatter! He is a charming fellow, rather *your* sort, Robert."

"Indeed?" Steele's tone indicated that he resented her last remark.

"He's evidently heard about Anthony—about his being a Jew, you know,

Aunt Addie," Flora explained Steele's coolness.

"Ah, yes—I know there are rumors," Mrs. Wilder admitted. "But I, for one, discredit them."

"Aunt Addie calls anything that she'd rather not believe a *rumor*," Flora gravely informed Steele.

Mrs. Wilder was all wistful forbearance. "This child of mine is an incorrigible tease, Robert," she remarked.

"You know as well as I do, Aunt Addie, that Anthony's father was orthodox," Flora was blunt. "Don't you now?"

Mrs. Wilder drooped her head in gentle resignation. "As you please, my dear," she murmured. "Your poor old aunt doesn't know how to argue."

"My aunt admits his father was an orthodox Jew," Flora interpreted to Steele.

"What if he was? What if he was?" Mrs. Wilder assumed an attitude of large tolerance. "We in England haven't the petty prejudices of the States. It's our privilege to like whom we choose." She beamed with pleasure at her own broad-mindedness. "Over there," and she indicated, by a vague nod, the United States of America, "they are too tightly conservative. They don't dare to transgress—yet."

Steele raised politely quizzical eyebrows. "You think so? I shouldn't call it a matter of mere sneaking social timidity. We bar the Jews because their standards are abhorrent to us. It's a question of racial ethics, not etiquette."

"That's true, Robert." Flora gave him her hearty concurrence. "Anthony Bannermann's a delightful chap and all the rest of it; but give him a chance and he'd have his harem and he'd drench himself with perfumes and just wallow his life away."

"Flora, Flora!" Her aunt raised a hand in horrified deprecation. "Please don't talk in that way."

"I don't care, Aunt Addie," Flora returned with a defiant toss of her head. "Anthony's got it in him."

"I really cannot see the viewpoint of
S. S.—Jan.—2

either of you." Mrs. Wilder, when she disagreed with anyone, took particular pains to modulate her voice to a piercing sweetness. "I rank Mr. Bannermann as one of the most splendid men I know. But then—England considers the Jew and the Christian equal; and I often tell myself that there's nobody quite so staunchly British as the expatriate American." Thus did Mrs. Wilder, a native of St. Paul, sum up her own case.

"You mean yourself, Aunt Addie?" Flora asked her. "You mean that you're a hundred per cent Britisher?"

Mrs. Wilder humbly inclined her head.

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Addie," Flora said, "but you're really the most authentic specimen of the American Middle-West that it's ever been *my* lot to see."

"Ah—if you must descend to personalities—" Mrs. Wilder, leaving her sentence unfinished, compressed her lips, lifted her chin and, shutting her large white lids altogether, made of herself a statuesque image of beleaguered dignity.

Flora shot her a disgusted glance, then, for Steele's benefit, ground her small teeth again melodramatically.

CHAPTER IV

FIVE weeks after Flora left Rome, it had been definitely settled that she was to marry young Bannermann. There had evidently been, in the matter of this transaction, a whole-hearted cooperation between Mrs. Wilder and the girl. Steele, once his stiff-necked condemnation had become manifest, had been gently, discreetly assigned by Mrs. Wilder to a position in the background; he was still invited to tea and to dinner—but only when other and more brilliant guests could be counted on to dwarf him to the proper insignificance.

Flora herself, though she visited Steele occasionally at his rooms, proved impervious to argument and exhortation.

"Of course you think I'm a perfect

little beast, Robert," she had remarked one afternoon a few days before the announcement of her engagement. "I suppose I *am* a little beast—to be eager to marry a man with Anthony's reputation."

"Oh—then you know of his reputation?" Steele was distantly polite.

"Yes indeed!" she assured him. "I don't doubt I could tell you many things about Anthony that you haven't heard."

"Thanks." He stopped her short. "I know quite enough—please don't tell me any more."

"But you admit he's charming?" she pressed.

"He's—" Steele hesitated. "Well, yes, he's charming. And you're making yourself fall in love with him?"

"Good heavens, no!" She was emphatic. "I was infatuated in five minutes."

"Naturally, Flora, you take back all you said at dinner that night." He stated it as an obvious fact.

"Not a word, Robert—not a single word. I still think he may bring out the worst in me yet." She spoke with the strange harsh gravity so characteristic of her.

"Now for God's sake, child, stop this ridiculous talk about the worst!" he exclaimed. That particular statement from her always exasperated him.

"All right—I couldn't explain it to you, anyhow." She smiled affectionately into his eyes. "You'd only be shocked."

"If you should marry this Bannermann, would you consider it settling down?" he asked.

"Not at all." Her tone had a certain roughness. "It will mean globe-trotting on the grand scale for the rest of my life. Anthony has about as much conception of domesticity as Mama and Papa did. He's got town-houses and villas and things like that—but my precious tea-set will still be my nearest approach to a home." She gave a little shrugging sigh. "You'll let me come here sometimes? You won't wash your hands of me?"

She possessed again at this moment

the yearning, wistful appeal of the street-Arab. Though she had practically achieved the spectacular conquest of a millionaire, she brought into Steele's mind the image of a shelterless child who had crept up to his hearth to warm her frost-bitten fingers.

"I'm here to make you as cozy as possible and to listen," he gently assured her. "But I can't make out what you see in my place or me. *You* never listen, you know."

"But I drink in the nice warm air," she reflected aloud. "I get nourishment. You can't realize how much it helps me, Robert."

She left her small stool by the fire and, perching herself on the arm of his chair, rested her head against his. "Now if *you'd* only been Aunt Addie," she murmured, "I might have resisted Anthony."

"And if you'd ever thought of me as anything but an old woman," he grimly reminded her, "I might have done you some positive good."

"Oh, no!" she earnestly protested. "It's because I don't have to think of you as a *man* that I get so much comfort out of you."

It was a genuine cry from her harassed soul; but it wounded Steele.

"Thanks, oh, thanks!" He was frankly bitter.

Steele, from his painstaking study of Flora and Anthony Bannermann, had soon reached a clear understanding of the relation. The man's wealth had obviously exerted very little influence. Flora, trained to adventure and to amazing fluctuations in her family's finances, had acquired the instincts of a gambler. To her, mere spending, combined with inviolable security, would soon degenerate into the dullest, stalest of occupations. Her parents had always lived improvidently; but with them the vulgar surface display had been, in a manner, redeemed by the imperative need of wit and cunning and by the sportsmanlike acceptance of extravagant odds. As Bannermann's wife, however, Flora would be robbed of the thrill of suspense. No matter

with how prodigal a hand she tossed the bright coins abroad, she could not get to the bottom of the money-bag.

Anthony Bannermann, in his own person, made up for the handicap of his prosaic monetary soundness. Born and reared in New York and graduated from Harvard, he yet had none of the distinguishing marks of the American. For the past five years he had lived abroad; but he had not even acquired the European stamp. He was essentially an Oriental. The son of a German father and a Hungarian mother, he had inherited little from those races; as so often happens to people with a Jewish strain in the blood, he had seemed to take his being from the commingling of germ-cells bequeathed his parents from ancient and forgotten sires. With many generations of authentic European forebears at his back, Bannermann had shown himself from his birth a combination of Arab and Mongol. Indeed, he had not appeared the child of his immediate progenitors—rather the son of a man and woman dead perhaps a thousand years. Flora had often remarked to Steele on Bannermann's racial peculiarities.

"He reminds me of the rich young Egyptians or Syrians you see at Nice and Monte Carlo," she would comment. "So polite and cultured and correct in public—but, if you've ever had suites in the same hotel-corridors with them, Robert, you know what the private goings-on are like!"

Bannermann was very handsome. Tall and slightly stooped, he gave the effect of abounding health, of a natural suppleness without any need of reinforcement by athletics or drastic exercises. His particular sort of sleek good-looks had obtained its fullest development from the permeation through his pores of sunshine, from a general policy of luxurious basking. Though he impressed a casual observer as slim, a closer scrutiny revealed that his smooth poreless flesh was as tightly stretched as the skin of a grape over the plump ripened pulp. His skeleton must have been of a delicate mould; for he ap-

peared to have been constructed without bones. Most men, inside their clothes, seem to take on the quality of bisque dolls that, in all invisible places, are made of rags. But with Bannermann, one was always conscious of the lithe body under the scrupulously correct English suits.

This clever, indolent, sleepily charming man had inspired in Steele, at the very first encounter, a fierce Puritanical antipathy. For all his discreet and even diffident courtesy in Mrs. Wilder's drawing-room, Bannermann could not disguise the fact that he was as unashamed a sensualist as a cat. On the dullest of London days, he appeared to be stretching himself languorously from a prolonged sun-bath. His influence on Flora was one of direct physical enchantment. It could not be said that she was in love with him; rather, her senses seemed intoxicated or drugged by him.

"It scares me sometimes," she confessed to Steele. "I feel as if I was being put under opium. I know it's silly." She sniffed the air suspiciously as she spoke. "But ever since I've met Anthony, I'm constantly smelling musk."

Steele, too, when he talked with the young plutocrat, had that faint exotic scent in his nostrils. He had mused to himself, with a certain disgust, "He somehow hasn't the smell of a genuine white man."

The marriage was set for six weeks after the public announcement of the engagement. Mrs. Wilder, who could be generous to a degree in anticipation of a future reimbursement with interest, showered checks on Flora. The girl shopped at a feverish rate; the trousseau promised to be opulent enough to suit even Bannermann's gorgeous tastes.

CHAPTER V

For a full fortnight Steele saw nothing of his eccentric god-daughter. His time was largely occupied in the guidance of another orphan.

Young Peter Higginson had arrived at his rooms one evening with a letter of introduction from an uncle in New York. It had taken Steele less than five minutes to appraise the boy as a true Higginson and therefore as someone built on his own conservative lines. They had, in the course of that first interview, achieved a solid dignified friendship. The following day, Peter had removed his luggage from the hotel and settled himself in Steele's apartment for the remainder of his London visit. He had come to Europe for three months, in order to put the finishing touches on his correct education; on his return to New York, he would enter his uncle's law firm. A single look at him was enough to convince one that he was destined for a career of honor and esteem. He was poor; in all probability, he would succeed in his chosen profession and make enough money to leave his heirs a modest competence; but no Higginson had ever been known to die rich.

"Father left me just enough to live on," he explained, with great seriousness, to Steele. "I'm going into the principal for this trip—but I consider it an investment, you know. Travel is part of a man's training."

Keen intelligence, thrift and a finicky sense of order—these qualities were part of the stock-in-trade of all members of Peter's family. Steele respected at once this slender youth of twenty-five. Though it was obvious that he lacked anything as paganly unregenerate as a sense of humor, his stern strength acquitted him of the stigma of priggishness. Like his admirable ancestors, he would gain the world's respect by reason of his warrior-like hardihood. No Higginson had ever been good merely because temptation had passed him by. Watching Peter, Steele realized that he possessed many traits in common with the great knights errant of medieval legend. He schooled his mind to a level-headed coolness; he hardened and cured his body by unremitting exercise. Along with his rigid ethical code, he had inherited a transparent simplicity

and a romantic misunderstanding of women. A passionate and quixotic chivalry toward the other sex was the natural result of his earnest temper. He did not have the saving grace of tolerant, amused acceptance of feminine weaknesses.

Steele had soon regretted his few sympathetic allusions to Flora's plight; for Higginson at once began to visualize her as the conventional beleaguered damsel.

"It's all wrong, sir—it's simply damnable!" Peter had fired up. "How can a girl like that come to any good when she's never been given a single chance?"

"I honestly think, Peter," Steele had returned with sage caution, "that Flora wouldn't know what to do with her chance if she did get it. Some people are born hopeless."

"I don't believe it—not for a minute!" Higginson vehemently returned.

"You'll find it out, though, some day," Steele warned him.

Flora, when she at last arrived at the apartment one afternoon, had immediately given Steele's guest a glance of frank approval. As she shook his hand with boyish winning cordiality, she remarked, "I'm so sorry we haven't met before. I'm sure we'd have got on very well." She turned at that to Steele. "Why didn't you drop me a line, Robert? I'm *just* the person to take charge of a stranger in London."

"Thank you very much—you're very kind," Higginson, stiff and shy and courteous, acknowledged. After this tentative beginning, he remained silent and allowed the others to pursue their talk without interruption.

"You're much too busy, my dear," Steele reminded Flora.

"But he could have called for me at the shops and we could have lunched together and gone somewhere to dance between fittings," she persisted.

"He's not here to dance between fittings, you know—but to see the sights," Steele told her laughingly.

"There's no reason why he shouldn't have done both." She clung to her point. Then, as if struck by a sudden

inspiration, "You'll let me do *something* for your friend, Robert?" she asked.

"Anything in reason," he agreed.

"Good!" She nodded emphatically. "You've had him for ten days, you say; you've shown him the Tower and the National Gallery and the Zoo, I'm sure. He can easily spare the time now for a cruise on Anthony's yacht. You'll come—both of you." She spoke as if she considered it already settled.

"Good heavens, child—not so fast!" Steele cried. "Give us a few particulars, do."

"Well, we start Monday and we're to be gone a fortnight. We get back just in time for the wedding." Swiftly she rattled off the itinerary. "I came here today to invite you, Robert. We all want fresh air—lots of fresh air. I know Mr. Higginson does, anyhow."

Steele, keeping his own counsel, thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets and wandered, with an elaborate simulation of aimlessness, to a window. From that position, he watched his two young charges out of the tail of one eye. That they made a delightful pair he would not have attempted to deny. Flora had taken a cigarette from the table; after tapping it, in most business-like fashion, against the back of her hand, she had put it into her mouth.

"May I have a light, Mr. Higginson?" she mumbled, tilting her head back. She looked at that moment enchantingly, distractingly pretty.

Peter, in his nervous attempts to serve her, broke three matches; the fourth went out between his fingers. "I beg your pardon—I'm awfully sorry," he stammered, with a rueful glance at the box he held. "I haven't got any more."

"Never mind!" She nodded her thanks for his efforts, brought out a big sulphur match from the pocket of her frock, struck it on her thumb-nail and lit the cigarette.

For a long moment the two youngsters stood, as it were, confronted. Flora's slightly swaggering self-assurance had dropped; she frowned, grave

and intent, up at Higginson; absently she picked tiny particles of tobacco off her lips. Without warning, Peter had grown from an embarrassed boy to a man of impressive dignity. He had, like so many others of his race, suddenly heard a call to service and devotion; he was face to face with his destiny.

Steele coughed; but, just before he had by that simple expedient brought matters down to earth again, he had realized how compellingly handsome, how magnificently endowed for conquest young Higginson was. Spare and of heroic height, with eyes of a keen wintry blue set rather deep in his fine skull, he must have quickened to headiness Flora's drugged senses. He somehow resembled a Norse with the dazzling influence of the snow still upon him.

Steele felt a stir of anxiety, almost of panic. It certainly was not for a Higginson to undertake the protection of a girl tempered by the vicissitudes of a continental life. By every rule of experience and inheritance, Flora belonged to Anthony Bannermann.

So Steele announced, a bit sharply, "It's kind of you, Flora—inviting us for your cruise. But it's out of the question, quite out of the question. We've got our time all mapped out."

An expression of fear, even of pain, came into Flora's face. "Why, Robert, why?" she begged. "Oh, *please!*"

"If you don't mind, Mr. Steele," Higginson said, his voice firm, inflexibly determined, "if you wouldn't consider it ungrateful on my part, I'd very much like to go."

Flora looked at Steele now with a challenging defiance and waited for his verdict.

"Of course I don't mean to stand in your way, Peter," he announced. "Go if you want to—by all means go." Since he was aware at present that nothing could break the boy's iron resolve, he made his surrender as gracious as possible.

Flora, rushing up to Steele, seized both his hands. "And you'll come

too?" she pleaded. Her tone of remorseful apology showed clearly that the desire for his presence had but just come back to her as an after-thought.

"No, my dear—I can't leave London now." He was politely regretful. "Next time, perhaps."

"Oh, next time!" she echoed with faint derision. "Don't talk about the next time, Robert. I want to think of this cruise as going on forever."

Her words annoyed Steele; they had seemed directed at Higginson rather than at himself. Flora had begun to play up, and not quite honorably, to her new friend. There was, in her protest, the subtle implication of an imminent sacrifice. A moment ago, her expression of fear had been genuine: that she experienced at times a sinking terror at the thought of Bannermann's influence was manifest. But sacrifice—no, it was never that! To witness this first sully of her usual clear candor grieved Steele and filled him with foreboding. It was immensely perilous to cheat a Higginson.

TEN days afterward, when Steele heard Mrs. Wilder's shrill hysterical voice over the long-distance wire, he knew her message before she had got further than, "Robert Steele—is this Robert Steele? I can't hear you, I can't hear!"

Flora and Higginson had disappeared from the yacht the night before. As he listened to the sobbing complaints of the widow, Steele was nodding his head over his own thoughts: Yes, it had been inevitable, inevitable, from the moment of the first meeting in his rooms.

Later that day, he received a telegram from Flora. "Peter and I to be married. A home for me at last. Hurrah."

CHAPTER VI

FLORA had had almost a year of peace and domesticity before Steele saw her again. A tenant in his house on Gramercy Park had given up his rooms at a season when Steele was feel-

ing vaguely dissatisfied with London; he had therefore lost no time in returning to New York and re-establishing himself and his cat in the spot where they had both been born.

He arrived in the morning; that same afternoon, he paid Flora a visit at her diminutive duplex apartment on West Eleventh Street. At sight of him, she had cried, "Robert—you darling! I've been so homesick for you," and had thrown herself precipitately into his arms.

Giving him a kiss and a tight hug, she murmured, "I'm so glad to see you—you don't *know* how glad. I was feeling cross—at a perfect dead end—"

Over her head, he had been examining her drawing-room. "What a jolly place you've got!" he exclaimed.

"Yes—I do love it." She nodded up at him proudly. "Let's have a look at it right off, shall we?" She tugged him, by the sleeve, over to a window. "You get the best view from here," she explained.

"Where's Peter?" he had asked on his way across the room.

Now, having placed him at the proper vantage-point, she went back to his question. "Where's Peter? Why, at the office of course. I've married a business-man, Robert. Had you forgotten?"

"I'm afraid I had, for the moment," he confessed. "One doesn't connect you with business, child."

"Well, from now on one must," she humorously rebuked him. "Doesn't it seem strange, my receiving you in my own home? Tell me, please, that it doesn't look like the drawing-room of a struggling lawyer's wife."

"Indeed it doesn't. It has dignity—it has *charm*," he told her. "You've done wonders, Flora. And I never saw such spotlessness."

"I supply the charm," she said. "I'm afraid Peter's responsible for the dignity and the spotlessness. Every evening he goes over the whole place with a vacuum-cleaner; he dusts, too, how he does dust!"

"Splendid!" Steele commented.

"And he cooks the dinner sometimes, Robert," she pursued. "He doesn't like restaurants and we can't afford a servant. The poor boy has to save every penny to liquidate my back debts."

"Your debts?" Steele evinced surprise.

"Yes," she sighed. "All the money I got from Aunt Addie in London, you know. If he didn't pay her, she'd probably sue for it—but that's not Peter's reason. He does it because he's honorable; as far as I'm concerned, I fail to see why anyone should bother to be honorable with Aunt Addie. But there!" she interrupted herself. "I'll be quiet, Robert, till you've finished looking."

Silently, with an occasional nod of discriminating approval, he scrutinized the long two-storied room with the winding narrow staircase in one corner. It was easy to pick Peter's contributions to the general effect. The principal articles of furniture—the few dignified chairs, the glorious old polished table between the windows, the brass fittings of the fire-place, the great low chest against the wall, with its deep scars and its gigantic clasps—these Steele characterized as "straight undiluted Higginson." Peter would naturally, on his mother's death, have kept reverent possession of the heirlooms she had left him; something of family pride and solemn stability seemed instinct in these massive treasures. They were arranged in such a way as to give an impression of space and proportion. Peter, with his inherited sense of order, of large simplicity, had seen to it that his home should not be crammed.

"We have quantities of perfectly gorgeous stuff still in the storehouse," Flora remarked. "We haven't room here; and Peter wouldn't think of selling a single footstool. I wish he could see you now, Robert."

Steele, who had become lost in a lingering, gloating contemplation, roused himself now in all politeness and gave his attention to the more dashing decorative touches that Flora had supplied.

"The pictures are striking—*very* striking," he said. "And *you're* responsible for them."

She nodded. "Of course some of them are a trifle mad," she admitted. "But it's a nice Slavic madness. The Russians had an exhibition in Brooklyn last fall. I spent practically a whole week over there. I used to lunch with the painters, pay their checks and beat them down on their pictures."

"And Peter didn't like it a bit?" Steele vouchsafed.

"Not a bit!" she laughed. "He scolded me. He tries so hard to make a plain American out of me."

Steele, his glance traveling over the walls, could not keep a twinkle of amusement out of his eyes. "They're extraordinary pictures," he reflected. "But aren't they rather gruesome to live with?"

"You don't like them; you're making fun of them!" She sounded hurt and there was just a suggestion of a pout around her mouth.

"I beg your pardon, Flora," he hastened to apologize. "They're very fine, of their type."

"I'm sensitive—because Peter is stern sometimes and—" she hesitated for the right word—"and intolerant." Her words carried so genuine a plea for understanding that Steele gave her shoulders a sympathetic paternal pat. "He thinks it's affectation to pretend you like such pictures. But I *know* they're good, Robert. I've got a perfect right to admire them."

"You have indeed." Steele's earnestness matched her own; for, in his careful examination of the half-dozen paintings, he had by now recognized, in each of them, the authentic quality of disordered genius. They all witnessed the untutored struggle after truth, the vanquishing of tragic handicaps.

Flora pointed to a small canvas over the mantel. "That's really the best of them," she said. "Peter's always asking what it means." The significance *wasn't* clear: against a dense background of oily black could be seen a disconnected mass of nude limbs and an

occupied that land since married, and from an old man now. It was in certain aspects, consequently, both; but somehow it possessed a certain inherent beauty.

"You do not something in that, Robert? You do?" His grasp of the canvas was tightened.

"I like them better every minute," he assured her.

"Good! Now, then?" She turned him around to face the wall opposite the mirror. "What do you think of my great treasure?"

He emitted a low whistle of astonishment, almost of incredulity. "Where under the sun—?" he gasped, suddenly confronted by a painting that, in its triumphant beauty, had quite taken away his breath.

"Oh, I didn't buy it," she explained. "It was a wedding-present."

"Not from your Aunt Adelaide?" he asked with mock-seriousness.

"If Aunt Addie'd given me a picture, I'm sure it would have been one of Sir Frederick Leighton's. Can't you guess, Robert?"

"Anthony Bannermann." He did not put it at present in the form of a question. He stated it as a self-evident fact.

"Yes—Anthony," she said. "Wasn't it kind of him—wasn't it decent? After the nasty trick I'd played on him, you know."

Steele, intent on the picture, remarked, "French, of course. Who did it, Flora?"

"Renoir—Renoir!" She gleefully carolled it. "I honestly believe it's the greatest thing he ever did."

Steele was questioning—but not aloud—the fitness of the picture as a wedding-present from a man. A masterpiece—yes—but surely, granted the occasion, in questionable taste! In a wood of luscious greens and golds, there lolled a corpulent, jovial peasant-woman surveying her nakedness with impudent black eyes and dabbling her great brown legs in a rushing brook. In character-delineation, in color, in sheer animal-spirits, it was magnificent.

"Immense—and so hearty!" Flora

deconstructed it. "Isn't she a dear old-fashioned thing?"

"Yes, certainly," Steele responded.

They turned on to read a book—the I'd have died to get," Flora said, nostalgically sparing her childhood at the remembrance of the book.

For a good half-hour, Steele's tour of inspection went on. All the room—the library dormitory, the narrow upper hall that surrounded the wall at the entrance, and the two bedrooms—were fitted up in composite fashion: venerable colonial furniture on the floor, and about the walls reproductions in color of the latest expressionist stage-sets and of the newest revolutionary paintings from Europe.

When they returned to the drawing-room, Flora, kneeling on a cushion in front of a table about a foot high, gravely brewed tea and prepared tiny sandwiches.

"I see you still have your old tea-set," Steele remarked.

"Yes—and you're wondering why the things I've bought since aren't just as quaint and old-fashioned." Cleverly she completed his thought for him.

"Well—yes," he confessed.

"I suppose I was afraid of losing my identity," she mused, more to herself than to him. "I couldn't bear the idea of burying my old gypsy self; so I had to assert it with a regular splash."

"I hope you're not refusing to develop a new self," Steele ventured. "You've craved this change all your life; for heaven's sake make the most of it."

"Oh, I'm trying—I honestly am." She was earnest. "Of course I have occasional lapses; that's only to be expected."

"But you're happy?" he put it up to her.

"I'm happy," she echoed. "I adore Peter, you know. I've said some spiteful things this afternoon because I feel disgruntled."

"Why?" he drew her out.

"In the first place, I wanted six weeks—just six weeks—abroad with Peter this summer." Busying herself

with the truthfulness, she carefully avoided Steele's penetrating glance. "He refused."

"How could he do otherwise?" Steele challenged her. "He's a young man at the very beginning of his career, remember."

"Yes," she granted that. "But after all, he's working for his living. He has the right to have some variation."

"Remember?" Steele reminded her. "He has no right."

"Peter refused—at first," Flora interrupted. Then, suddenly looking up at Steele, she announced, "He gave in, though. We had the middle of June."

"You said? Good Lord!" he cried.

"You see," she explained gloomily, "I'm going to have a baby. That brought him around."

They were silent for a moment. Steele got up from his chair and, bending over her, took her chin in his hand. Their eyes met, Flora's with a glitter of bravado in them, Steele's full of affection and solicitude.

"Afraid, child?" he asked.

She shook her head impatiently. "No—it's not that I'm afraid. I don't believe having a baby is half so hard as women pretend."

"What is the trouble then?" he coaxed.

"It's too soon—it's too soon." She was emphatic. "I wasn't ready. I should have got through the experimental stage first. How do I know yet where I'm coming out?"

"The baby is exactly what's needed, I'd wager anything," he warmly comforted her. "It will bring you out in the *right* direction."

"Maybe." She deliberated it with a frown. "It gave me my trip to Europe at least—and that's not to be scoffed at."

"Come, Flora." He resorted to sternness. "Please don't put the matter on those ugly, practical grounds."

"Oh, all right!" She shrugged. "But I, for one, don't see any great beauty in the business."

"You will—you're merely at the stubborn period now," he told her.

"By the way, Robert," she remarked

after a brief pause, "don't let on to Peter that I told you. He'd only be furious with me. I shouldn't to have broken my secret this early."

"Where's it to be?" he asked.

"Not for about eight months," she said.

Steele fingered an old Peter Higginson returned from his office. He had wanted to catch the boy unawares, to find out, before he could take refuge in his usual impenetrable reserve, the direct effect upon him of his year with Flora. Coming home from an arduous day's work, he would in all probability be too tired for dignified concealments.

Already, Steele had been struck by certain undertones of discontent in the prattling avowals of the girl herself. Of course misunderstandings were inevitable in every marriage; and Flora, when she confided in Steele, had always spoken her mind as fully and frankly as if she had been having the matter out with her own heart. It might be that, as far as it was possible in a mere human relation, these two youngsters had achieved an idyllic happiness. Steele looked to Higginson, at any rate, for enlightenment.

Peter was not surprised off guard by his quizzical caller; his attitude, from the moment he appeared in the drawing-room with three immense legal tomes under his arm, had remained unchanged throughout the visit. Steele felt himself in the presence of a still unsolved problem; as Flora had said, the alliance had not got beyond the rudimentary experimental stage. For people who had lived together eleven whole months, the young couple seemed somehow insufficiently acquainted. Steele wondered at present whether two natures so ill-matched in their elements, so utterly foreign to each other, could ever strike out from their contact a spark warm enough to result in an effective amalgamation.

Evidently Peter's formality toward his wife was unbending. His treatment of her resembled that of a preceptor, a stern disciplinarian at grips with a refractory child. He was very glad to see

Steele again and showed his pleasure in his usual grave shy way. The two men sat opposite each other and discussed their affairs: Peter, as he talked of his work in his uncle's office, showed himself preoccupied, intensely concerned, more than a little anxious about his progress. Flora was restless: she sat for a while on a stool at Peter's feet, then climbed up on the arm of his chair and rested an elbow on his shoulder; courteously but firmly he pushed her away. With a resigned shrug, she moved over to Steele's chair: but she had soon got down again and, cigarette in hand, was strolling impatiently around the room.

At last, marching back to the men, she exclaimed, "Now do, for heaven's sake, shut up about your law." She made a little wry grimace in Steele's direction. "When my husband gets hold of another man, he tries to make me think I don't belong on my own premises." While she spoke she playfully ruffled up Higginson's hair.

He jerked his head away. "Don't do that, Flora." His gentleness did not conceal the rebuke in his tone.

"Very well, very well." She turned once more to Steele. "He'd slap my hands for me if he wasn't so darned polite." Wrinkling up her little nose, she laughed mischievously.

"Please be sensible, Flora," her husband warned her, sharply now.

"As we were saying, Mr. Steele—before we were interrupted," Flora, clearing her throat, remarked in droll imitation of Higginson. Then she swaggered off impudently to the other side of the room.

One of Steele's strongest impressions, as he went back over this scene later in front of his own fire, was of the lamentably bad showing Flora made before her husband. In her attempts to impart to the occasion an air of humorous bantering intimacy she sacrificed her own essential charm. It was when she viewed herself and the world with an ironic sagacity, an amused detachment, that she was most appealing. A precocious disillusion became her;

she could not frolic any more effectively than Higginson himself could. In her efforts to be playful, her spontaneity failed her and she appeared harsh, angularly self-assertive, distressingly metallic. She was not being honest either with herself or her husband. She had adopted a dangerous pose.

"As we were saying," young Higginson unconsciously echoed her words of a moment ago, "it's awfully hard for a man to put his theoretical knowledge into practice. My uncle's kind; he's generous and all that. But I want to feel I'm standing on my own feet."

Steele nodded his comprehension. "Having a pull is apt to make one over-conscientious, I think," he reflected aloud.

"The work is piling up steadily just now," Peter went on. "I'd had an idea the next three months would be our slack-time, so I applied for a leave of absence."

"I see—a little holiday, I suppose?" Steele sought to appear non-committal.

"Flora's probably told you," Peter pursued, raising his voice to include her in the conversation.

"Er—she did mention it," Steele acknowledged.

"It was never actually settled—it was just a tentative understanding, you know," Peter told him. "Now that I've found how busy we're to be indefinitely—"

Flora had crept back to Steele's side and her eyes were tensely peering at her husband. For a moment they were all silent.

"That's a damned lie!" she suddenly cried, her face white and fierce.

"Flora!" Peter warned her. "Flora!" Getting up from his chair, he stood towering above her, his expression one of inflexible command.

"I don't care—it's true, it's true!" Defiantly she turned her back on him and appealed to Steele. "He promised me, Robert—on his honor. And he never meant it. He's just been waiting for his chance to call it all off." She began to sob hysterically. "I can't stand another summer in New York

and he knows I can't." Throwing herself into Steele's arms, she pressed her head against his shoulder. "Make him do it!" she begged. "Make him keep his word."

Higginson looked down wearily at her. "She's exaggrating, Mr. Steele, as usual," he announced, calm and dispassionate. "Flora considers a thing settled long before she has any right to. There was a possibility—a remote possibility—of our going abroad. That's all!" Steele, with Peter's blue eyes level in his, understood that the truth of the matter had been succinctly stated by him.

"No, Robert, no!" Flora hotly protested through her sobs. "I had my clothes, we'd decided on the ship, *everything* was settled."

Peter shrugged. "She'd settled everything," he contradicted. "I've cautioned her repeatedly we might have to give it up. She wouldn't listen—and this is the natural result. I expected something of the sort."

"So did I!" She sat up, pale from her rage and disappointment, on Steele's knees. "You've never for a minute *thought* we'd go, Peter. Now, *how* am I to live through a second summer in New York?"

"I don't intend you to stay here, Flora," he said, his quietness still unbroken. "My uncle's place at Nantucket is ready for you."

"Nantucket!" she wailed. "Where, in God's name, is Nantucket?" Her anger had spent itself now; dejectedly, she climbed down out of Steele's lap. "If you intended me to go to Nantucket, why did you talk about Paris?"

"It was *you* that talked about Paris, Flora," Higginson reminded her.

"You're a coward, Robert—that's what you are." She faced about and regarded Steele sulkily. "After all these years—and you haven't said one word for me. You've been on Peter's side right along. I'm through with you."

Before Steele could say a word in his own defense, she had run quickly up the stairs. At the top, she glowered

down on the two men. "I hope I'll die when the baby's born!" she exclaimed, her breath catching in her throat. "I never wanted it, anyhow."

She rushed into her bedroom and the door slammed shut behind her.

CHAPTER VII

FLORA, after six dawdling, disgusted months in Nantucket, had come back to New York to have her baby. She had refused to acknowledge any change in her physical condition; she had resented the painstaking solicitude of her husband and Steele.

"I don't feel a bit different from usual," she would lie pettishly. "I wish you wouldn't try to make me believe I do."

On the first of December the child, a girl, was born.

"Hm—and I'm its mother," had been Flora's laconic comment when she came out of the opiates. "But then, Peter's its father—that's some compensation."

When she returned from the hospital, Flora found herself the mistress of a much enlarged household. Higginson, scrupulously economical though he was, could not be called stingy. He was quite willing to make a sane increase in his monthly expenditures. At present, a competent cook and a trained nurse were necessary to the proper running of his establishment; and, in the two women he chose, he showed his usual keen acumen.

"Mary and Miss Bishop are a triumphant pair of females," Flora had confided to Steele. "They're sheer perfection, in fact. But my God!" and she shook her head eloquently. "They're terrible to have around all the livelong day. Our servants abroad used to be a thieving, immoral crowd—and most of them got drunk. But they had *charm*, Robert—they were amusing. These two women ought to be matrons in a house of correction."

"Nonsense!" Steele scoffed. "You're unreasonable, Flora. They do every bit of the work between them. What more can you ask?"

"My idea of a servant is somebody you can gossip and squabble with," she remarked gravely. "I can do neither with Mary and Miss Bishop. And all three of them—"

"Three?" Steele interrupted.

"Oh, yes." She was casual. "Peter completes the trio. All three of them consider it disrespectful when I call the baby *It*. But so far she is just *It* to me. Of course I'll probably adore that child some day."

"Of course you will," Steele agreed.

"But I'm not going to pretend I do now," she announced argumentatively. "I simply am not going to—and that's all there is to it."

During the first six months of the infant's existence Flora remained apathetic toward it. Since its birth, she had not been well. Though she would never have confessed to the slightest physical failing, she impatiently submitted to a period of inactivity.

"My nerves are all jumpy and askew," was her way of putting it. "I'm going to a fascinating new-fangled specialist. He's convinced I'm more than half crazy. So am I!" This explanation soothed her queer pride.

So for a time she allowed the baby to pursue the conventional course, even to the extent of a baptism in the Episcopal church. Steele and two maiden aunts of Higginson's had served as godparents; the child received the name of Harriet Prudence Higginson.

"Harriet Prudence Higginson!" Flora had intoned it. "Isn't that dour for you?"

From the moment it became evident that Harriet Prudence, instead of growing merely pretty, threatened to develop into a diminutive droll replica of a Chinaman, Flora's real love for the child was born.

"Ever since the winter Papa and Mama and I spent in Pekin, I've been determined to have a Chinese baby," she seriously stated to Steele. "When I married Peter, I thought I'd have to postpone that little ambition indefinitely. But here we are, after all—in spite of the Mayflower!"

Henceforth the child was addressed by her mother as "Heathen"—short for "Heathen Chineese." Higginson entered stern protests against the insulting sobriquet—but to no avail.

"She's Harriet to you and Heathen to me," Flora persisted. "We'll both simply have to make the best of it, Peter."

The baby, at length emerging from her first protracted phase of somnolence, proved to be a creature of absorbing interest, a strange combination of exquisite sensibility and unregenerate shameless passions.

"Heathen's angelic today," or "Heathen's got all the crimes of the ages working in her today"—in some such terse style would Flora characterize the varying moods. In the presence of this infinitesimal pagan, with her disarming disregard of appearances and her positively barbarous methods of feeding, Peter himself allowed his stiff correctness to lapse; the infant was at present so utterly beyond control that all theories of mental and spiritual discipline must wait. Meanwhile, Miss Bishop continued marvelously efficient. Supreme authority was vested in her. The young parents, very quiet and very intent, were given many a long lecture on infant hygiene by the staid Englishwoman.

At this period, to Steele's delight, Flora and her husband achieved, with their shared responsibility, a calm, equable sort of companionship. Peter seemed to have learned the way to a relenting tenderness; there were times, indeed, when he almost struck a humorous note.

As the two of them bent over the crib of the tiny Harriet Prudence, he would occasionally throw an arm about Flora's shoulder and attempt a conscientious pleasantry. Flora, under his new groping quest for a substantial intimacy, had returned to her old intense seriousness. They were striving, with pathetic courage, after the meeting-ground that had so far failed them. Steele had hopes now of their success. He liked to spend a Sunday afternoon

with them, when Miss Bishop was off duty.

Every week the baby showed amazing advances in strength of body and wilfulness of character. One Sunday, on her father's lap, she lay in ribald content among blankets, noisily guzzled milk and, without apparent embarrassment, emitted it again to the accompaniment of bibulous hiccoughs; the very next Sunday, arrayed in the loveliest of smocks, she would comport herself in most ladylike fashion, decorously sipping a bit of broth and in general acting as if she were the polite hostess of the occasion; again, squealing her joy, she would show off, for the visitor's benefit, the latest developments in the art of creeping.

At last the day came when, dizzily, drunkenly lurching but determined, she piloted herself unaided around and around the drawing-room. She still wasn't an ordinary, pretty child: "She'll never be the conventional dimpled doll, thank God!" Flora was ever fervently exclaiming. She had, however, an irresistible charm: diminutive, even for the age of sixteen months, with an absurdly rotund stomach that she proudly protruded, with arms and legs of a shapely, solid plumpness and with a face that screwed itself up to an expression of canny calculation, she impressed an observer, almost in fact, rendered him abashed before such prying gnome-like appraisal. Steele could not rid himself of the idea that Harriet Prudence saw through him, rather scorned his weaknesses, but, full of infinite wisdom, was willing to excuse and condone.

When the baby was seventeen months old, Peter had found it necessary, for financial reasons, to dispense with Miss Bishop. The moment for inculcating the germs of reason and dependability into the child's savage little brain had come. In the past hers had been a mere rank physical ripening—not so very different from that of a wild animal's whelp; henceforth, she must be regarded as a human soul in a critical period of development. The Higginson

hardihood and the Higginson moral code must be taught her at any cost.

Before Miss Bishop had been gone a month, the uncompromising sternness of Higginson had asserted itself again in full force. His temporary leniency had been forgotten. He had assumed complete control over the child's life. During his day at the office the cook was delegated to take command of both diet and discipline. Flora's was the humiliating position of subordinate "understrapper," (as she called it) in her own home.

The fault was hers. Though she had desperately striven, during the past year, to make herself capable and to wipe out her impish perversity, her husband could not even now trust her with a really important charge. No sooner, at present, had Peter's attitude shown the first sign of hardening to its former rigor than she adopted her old pose of flippant irresponsibility. Once more, as on the first day she had met Higginson, Steele deplored her failure to be honest. After all, Peter had been candid with her from the start; he must, tragically soon in their relation, have discovered the flaw in her. Steele, as he pondered their marriage, could not blame Higginson for refusing to grant her any direct responsibility. With his over-developed sense of justice, he could not help realizing that his wife had been disingenuous toward him. In him she had found a refuge, but not, as she had led him to believe, from a man who disgusted her—rather from a man who appealed strongly to her unruly senses. She had told Steele that there was evil in her; she had kept that fact, however, from Higginson. He had found it out for himself and had resolved that the baby should not be exposed to it.

Even Flora's most passionately honest theories, in regard to the child, were at variance with her husband's.

She had finally put the case up to Steele. "Now if Heathen had been a boy, I might have seen Peter's viewpoint. It's all very well for a man to be noble and that sort of thing. But a

girl's *got* to have charm. Charm's what she absolutely needs; it'll get her by every time."

"And what do you mean, precisely, by charm?" Steele asked.

"She must talk perfect French and Italian; she must know how to dress exquisitely; and above all she mustn't bore people." Flora told off these three attributes on her fingers. "Arrogance ruins charm, you know. And Peter wants to make the baby so aggressively good that she'd scare the whole world off. *I* intend her to be good, too—but in an unobtrusive way." She pondered the matter in silence for a moment.

"Yes," she resumed, as if in answer to a question. "And I'm better qualified than Peter. I brought myself up, you see; I can profit by my own mistakes and follow out my own successes.

"For example?" Steele urged.

"For example," she returned, "I'm determined the child shall see the world and *know* it. It's the very best education. It will broaden her—though not, of course, in the way it's broadened me. Heathen's not to knock around as I've done." She was emphatic on that point. "Oh, no! She'll always have a fixed home and fixed principles. That will give her steadiness. The *big* mistake in my life" (this with solemnity that made Steele feel very young and very inexperienced beside her) "was my being let to explore such awful places and watch such unspeakable things from the time I was six years old. I can't remember the time, Robert, when I haven't known and relished what everybody around me was up to. This footman and that maid—this Fräulein and that butler!"

Impatiently she shrugged her sordid recollections aside. "Heathen's going to be level-headed—not silly and ignorant, mind!—and charming and a real aristocrat. And I'm willing to fight to gain my end, too!" While she talked, she was excitedly pacing up and down the drawing-room. "I'm not worried one bit about Heathen," she announced

at last. "She'll be all right. But I won't be sure of myself—not for a minute, Robert!—till the day I die."

"Come, come, Flora!" Steele gently coaxed.

"Well, but you and Peter don't know anything about me," she told him sharply. "You don't realize what's in my mind when it gets stirred up."

Her restlessness had begun to get the better of her. It seemed more a physical than a mental disorder—a condition wrought by racing pulses and heated blood.

"I wish to heaven I had something to occupy me," she complained. "But that dreadful Mary—she cooks and she mends and she manages us all. If we don't get to Europe next spring I'll go mad, Robert!"

Abruptly she turned on him, though he hadn't said a word. "Yes, I know all about my craving a home—I know all about it. Well, I still love this place. But I need change—once every five years anyhow. I'm absolutely alone in New York—except for you. And even you aren't enough for a lifetime."

"You've got Peter and the baby, my dear," Steele corrected her.

"Yes, and I adore them," she conceded. "But I don't see enough of Peter; and a baby gets on your nerves when you're with it all day long. I'm not a saint; neither's Heathen. When Peter is at home, he spends the time putting the baby against me."

"Sheer nonsense—*arrant* nonsense!" Steele shook his head and smiled.

She ignored this comment. "Perhaps he's in the right, after all," she reflected. "Perhaps he is." Her stubborn belief in herself as the child's guardian had suddenly given way to a rankling doubt.

With the remembrance of such disquieting scenes as these still vivid in his mind, Steele could not conceal his blank dismay when, calling one afternoon, he was nervously intercepted at the door by Flora with the tidings, "Anthony's here—we're going uptown for tea. *Would* you mind keeping Mary and Heathen amused—just for today?"

CHAPTER VIII

FLORA had once remarked to Steele, "I've always known there was some good in me; and I love Peter, now, with that part of my nature. The trouble is," and she had shaken a rather discouraged head, "Peter and I can't seem to get acquainted. I feel, most of the time, as if we'd just been introduced. It's very trying, Robert. We haven't even ordinary small-talk to keep the conversation afloat."

Steele had been full of sympathy for the plight of these two grotesquely ill-matched youngsters; and, from the very beginning, a dread had mingled with his solicitude. Peter had blindly dedicated his life to the annihilation of Flora's persecutors; and he had found the unconquerable, inexplicable foe to be herself. Flora had longed to settle down; she had fallen in love with a paragon of domesticity; then, growing weary of her safe anchorage, she had begun to pant again after the scudding, salty winds of adventure.

The baby had become a barrier the more against understanding. Peter loved it quietly, reasonably; Flora's adoration was stormy, petulant and jealous, a mixture of sheer idolatry and wild exasperation. Peter had unflinchingly the upper hand in the upbringing of the child; Flora was made to consider herself tragically unworthy, inexorably exiled from the shrine. Poor Higginson was unhappy enough in his treatment of his wife—there could be no doubt of that. He pitied her while he condemned her; but nowadays he was fighting his daughter's battles and to him Flora seemed, of all enemies, the most treacherous. Strangers from the start, they faced each other now across an ever-widening distance.

Anthony Bannermann's sudden appearance in New York had given Steele considerable anxiety. Knowing the Higginson qualities as he did, he feared an imminent catastrophe. Peter, however, appeared to have schooled himself to accept the equivocal situation without a single protest. He talked very

little now, even to Steele. He would sit watching Flora in a musing silence; and in his eyes there would be a new understanding and a guarded wistfulness of regret.

For nearly a month Steele looked on in bewilderment at this strange development. The tense strain Peter had been under since his marriage, that had made him spare almost to gauntness, seemed to have slackened. Later, Steele was to realize that it was a part of the extraordinary youth's system of economy to cease expending his energy directly he had convinced himself that the effort must be fruitless. He had sought mightily, heroically, to aid Flora; then of a sudden he had learned beyond doubt that she was utterly outside his influence. With this knowledge had come a gentler, more despairing affection, as for one thwarted by nature of any consistent redeeming merits. Hoarding his resources for the benefit of the child, he gave Flora absolute freedom to fulfill her own lot. The marriage could not last; it was for her to break it up when her unaccountable impulses prompted.

Flora, too, saw how matters stood. Alone with her husband and Steele, she had again the driven, hungry expression that had been so characteristic of her in the old insecure days of her European wanderings. It was as if she already felt herself homelessly adrift and as if she had lost something of her former bravado in the contention against those bleak winds of chance.

She had always claimed that, with Anthony Bannermann, she was at her most intelligent; Steele seeing them together now, could not doubt the truth of the assertion. Where Peter and Flora had signally failed, Anthony and Flora triumphantly succeeded. The moment Bannermann appeared, she discarded the insincerities by which she had sought, unaided, to give an air of humorous comradeship to the intercourse of Peter and herself. In Bannermann's presence she was quiet, sagacious, natural, with an irrepressible wit that in no way detracted from her

essential gravity. They talked altogether in French. They discussed lightly and charmingly subjects that Steele would have hesitated to broach in his club. A Gallic piquancy in their chatter rendered the most audacious topics palatable. The clever, shameless young Jew was so completely lacking in offensive familiarity, so fastidiously, springily delicate in his conversational tread that Steele, though he still recoiled in distaste from him, could not help granting him a certain fascination combined with a genuine unobtrusive kindness toward Flora. Like a great sleepy cat, too indolent and too secure of his power ever to unsheathe his claws, he treated Flora with a gentle playfulness. He knew the value and the fragility of so authentic a specimen; he would never injure her or force her against her will. Flora, conscious that she was showing to rare advantage with him, increasingly aware, too, of his persuasive spell, responded to his fluent talk as to a caress.

So, for a month, Flora and Bannermann were constantly together. He had tea with her or with her and Steele; he dined often at the apartment. He and she went to the opera, to concerts, to plays. Higginson calmly granted her his permission to do whatever she liked with her time. With Bannermann, she was apparently happy, unflaggingly absorbed and in high spirits.

Steele and Higginson, whose whole lives had been a meticulous self-discipline in the established conventions, could not comprehend for a moment the workings of a lawless brain like Flora's. To both men, with their ordered minds, the canceling of a bond meant an intricate legal procedure carried on according to civilized custom. Then, before the direct question of divorce had even been touched upon, she had taken the law recklessly into her own hands.

One evening, Higginson and Steele were smoking cigars in front of the fire and Flora, on a low stool beside her husband's chair, was puffing her habitual cigarette. No one had spoken for a long time, when, without warning,

Flora jumped up, buried her head in her arms on the mantel and burst into tears.

Higginson got to his feet and, bending over her tenderly, took her chin in his hand and looked down into her pale face. "What's the matter, Flora?" he urged.

With her chin still in his grasp, she shook her head sorrowfully. "Oh—nothing," she told him. "I've made such a damned mess of things—that's all." Her fit of crying had lasted only a minute; she was calm again now. Freeing herself from Higginson, she turned to Steele.

"You think I haven't tried, Robert; but I swear I have. How was I to know what the devil in me would do? How?" With that last sharp monosyllable she rapped her knuckles against the arm of his chair.

Steele clasped her hand in both of his and drew her down on his knees; he could not answer her question, except by a slow headshake.

She sat up, stiffly erect, and looked straight at Higginson. "I cheated, Peter—I know I did. But it wasn't only you I was fooling—I was fooling myself, too. I thought I could go through with it." She sighed. After a moment, "Just *when* did you give me up, Peter?" she asked with good-humored abruptness.

Steele, whenever in future he lived out this scene, never failed to be amazed at his own and Higginson's obtuseness. Neither of them had for an instant caught the pointed finality in Flora's disclosures: it had been for them both a touching avowal, but without any application to the immediate future.

"When did I give you up?" Higginson had echoed. For the first time in Steele's experience of him, he seemed to waver, then to plunge deep into a bitter remorse. "I gave you up—too soon. I never really tried to help you—after the first few weeks." The words, though bald in themselves, came from him with the striking effect of a confession under torture.

"You did give me up pretty soon,"

she reflected, her tone almost matter-of-fact. "But don't feel too guilty about it, Peter. I couldn't have qualified, anyhow—not in a thousand years. If I only hadn't had this silly idea, somewhere in me, about wanting to be decent!" She shrugged resignedly. "That's where the trouble started; that's why I got you into this in the first place, Peter."

Slipping off Steele's lap, she went up to her husband—and this time as his comforter. He stood behind his chair, his elbows on the back and his hands under his chin; his face, with set jaw-bones, seemed locked in an expression of grim, unappeasable self-condemnation. "And lately, Flora—" There he broke off; he was confronting, with something like horror, his recent policy of cruel non-interference.

"Whether you'd given me enough rope or not, I'd have hanged myself somehow," Flora softly reminded him. She knelt in the chair and gave him a bright smile. "Don't think for an instant that *you're* to blame. I was hopeless long before you ever saw me."

She clasped her hands around his neck and lifted her mouth to his. "Kiss me—and we'll call it quits," she coaxed.

Higginson, without a word, swept her out of the chair and into his arms. For a long time, while he held her, he looked at her with a pained absorption. Then he kissed her gently and set her down.

During the brief embrace, they had achieved a moment's full interchange of understanding and sympathy.

"I think I'll go up and have a look at *Heathen*," Flora remarked presently, with perfect nonchalance. "How about it, Peter?"

It was an inflexible rule in the Higginson household that the baby should never be disturbed at night.

"Of course, Flora, of course," Peter returned. "Go ahead."

When the two men were alone, Peter brusquely announced, "Would you mind, sir, if I cleared out into the library?" Before Steele could answer, he had stridden out of the room and shut the door.

S. S.—Jan.—3

Letting himself out of the apartment a moment later, Steele heard excited screams of glee from the nursery; in the infantile babble, it was really difficult to distinguish the voice of the mother from that of the baby.

CHAPTER IX

THE next day Flora left the apartment soon after breakfast; she never returned. In the late afternoon, Steele received a characteristic telegram from her. "All bridges burnt. On way to California—traveling de luxe. Tell Peter. He may understand."

In Steele's heart, after the first hour's recoil of bitterness and downright shame, a despairing pity for the girl rose like a flood and drowned every other feeling. He was to find in Higginson, however, no ruth now, no tolerance. The news of the elopement froze him to adamant. He looked, just for a moment, at Renoir's jovially indecent peasant-woman on the wall, then stalked to the open window. The memory of Flora would be in future, to him, like a close and stifling scent.

"Did you have any suspicion of this, sir?" he had asked after a long silence, still boyishly deferential in the midst of his tragedy.

"Flora is unaccountable—I realized that, Peter," Steele returned. "But as for this—no! I was unprepared for this."

"Of course Flora and I knew we couldn't go on," Higginson continued. "But this, Mr. Steele! Not to be able to control herself—to throw herself away like an animal, like an animal!" He faced about, his eyes icily bright. "Last night I felt sorry for her. I thought there was some good in her—that she'd at least wait for a divorce, that she'd show a human regard for decency before she gave herself to this Jew."

"Don't, for God's sake, put her case that way," Steele pleaded. "She's rash, she's to be utterly condemned—I know all that. But I believe she did this with the mistaken idea that she was acting

for your good and for the baby's good as well as for her own."

Higginson sharply repudiated this comfort. "I know—better than you can—what prompted her. It's absolutely useless to argue with me, sir."

"Very well, Peter,—very well." Steele nodded his disconsolate head in surrender.

CHAPTER X

ONE afternoon some six weeks later Steele, in answer to the ring of his bell, opened the outer door of his apartment and immediately found himself enveloped in an ecstatic embrace. With a certain consternation, he stepped back over his threshold, but his visitor still clung to him.

"Don't be shy, Robert—now don't. It's only Flora!" she protested.

"Only Flora!" He gently but eloquently mocked her. "Only Flora, my dear child!"

"I'm just the same as ever, you know," she told him. "Please make me some tea and let me talk to you. I'm in a fearful rush." Taking him peremptorily by the arm, she led him into his study. Then, "Never mind about the tea—I really haven't the time for it," she decided. "We'd better stick to business." She pushed him into his chair and perched herself as usual on the arm.

"How radiant you look, Flora!" he almost grudgingly acknowledged.

She nodded. "That's because I've found my level at last," she remarked. "We're in New York only overnight. We start around the world tomorrow." Her use of the first person plural was charmingly, airily casual. "I was meant for just this, Robert—to fly around and around the globe without ever stopping. Trying to come down and dig my toes into the earth was a tragic mistake. Tragic!"

After a brief silence, "How's Heathen?" she asked brusquely.

"Oh—splendid, splendid! A perfect specimen," he returned.

"Still queer and droll and irresistible—not pretty?" she pressed.

"Irresistible—and not exactly pretty," he assured her.

"And—er—" she hesitated—"Peter?"

"See here, Flora," Steele put it up to her, "did you really expect that Peter would understand and be charitable?"

She frowningly pondered it. "He thinks I'm nothing but a little beast?" she asked at length.

Steele gave the topic a delicate veer. "Peter's making out very well—with his law."

"And the housekeeping?" Flora was curious. "Has he got the Bishop woman back?"

Steele nodded.

"How well it's all turned out!" she commented judicially. "As to my being a little beast!" She came back to that question with an air of objective interest. "Of course, in some ways I am, Robert. I don't deny that Anthony and I were mad about each other. But still, I don't see why our dashing off when we did wasn't the sensible thing after all."

"Peter felt," Steele told her, rather distantly courteous, "that the wise policy would have been to wait for a divorce."

"I don't see it." Flora was emphatic. "Our situation—Peter's and mine—was impossible. The sooner I made the break, the better. And as long as I was destined to live with Anthony, anyhow, what difference would a year or so have made?"

"I suppose," Steele reminded her, "Peter thought you might have waited till you'd married Bannermann before going to live with him."

"Marry?" Flora evinced a polite astonishment. "Why, Anthony wouldn't ever marry me, Robert. He's got a certain pride, you know; and, after the scandalous way I'd jilted him, it was up to me to go on his own terms. Besides, what's the sense of marriage for people like Anthony and me?"

"Good God, Flora!" Steele cried out in his mingled stupefaction and desperate concern. "Where do you expect to come out? What's to be the end of all this?"

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"Oh, there's no need to worry about *me*." She was serenely secure. "Anthony's very fortunate to have a girl of my kind—with family and a certain crazy intelligence and all that. We're most congenial, too. I'm much safer beyond the pale than inside of it. If we do separate occasionally, we'll come back to each other again." She looked down searchingly into his face. "You're shocked," she announced.

"Are you surprised at that?" he asked. "Don't you sound, even to yourself, a bit cold-blooded?"

"Cold-blooded!" she scoffed. "Good Lord, no! It's the respectable people with ideals, the upright ones like Peter, that are cold-blooded. I was unhappy when I was good, I admit that; and I'm much more content now. I suffered, I simply agonized, trying to be decent. I've got the silliest kind of sensitiveness about some things; and Peter was always hurting my feelings and discouraging me. He had big enough complaints against me, of course; but, in little, ridiculous ways, I had my grievances, too." She was intensely, fervently earnest in her incoherent plea for comprehension. "And when I'm hurt, I get reckless and I lose my head entirely." Her voice had grown shrill and she talked with an almost hysterical rapidity. "It doesn't matter how bad you are, Robert; what matters is how much you go through. And I tell you I went through ten times the misery Peter did. It nearly drove me insane—and that's the honest truth. I know I'd have disgraced him eventually, no matter how much consideration he'd had for me. I'm not saying he was to blame in the least. But you've got to give me the credit for being in torment, in torment, Robert. I'm no heroine: I can be unhappy, though, and I *have* been—just about enough to last me for the rest of my natural life."

"Forgive me, Flora—do forgive me," Steele, in deep contrition, implored her. Tenderly, remorsefully, he stroked her hand. He half-expected a flood of childish tears from her; but her excite-

ment had died down. She sat swinging her legs and staring abstractedly at the wall.

"You understand?" she suddenly confronted him.

"I do," he returned with penitent warmth.

"It was hard to express it," she confessed. "It's all so intricate. I still love them, you know—Heathen and Peter."

She paused.

"That's not all—not quite all, is it?" Steele gently urged her. "Come, child—I want you to tell me."

Frowning, she examined him for a moment with a certain decision and a vague distrust. Then, "Promise, on your honor, never to let on—never—to a single soul?" she solemnly put it up to him.

"On my honor!" he vowed.

She shook his hand to seal the pact. "Here goes then!" she told him. "I hate to talk, even to you, about sacrifices; it might sound so awfully smug, you know."

"Not from you, Flora. And it will do *me* so much good—hearing the whole truth," he coaxed her.

She patted his shoulder gratefully. "I might have stuck it out with Peter—much longer than I did, anyway," she murmured, "if it hadn't been for Heathen. But children are such funny little things. They're always influenced by the wrong person. I might have behaved myself and acted like a law-abiding citizen. Still, Heathen would have learned what I really was and she'd have ended by absorbing some of the bad in me. It would have been Mama and myself all over again, I'm sure. Let a youngster choose between good and evil and it will jump for the evil."

"So you made it impossible for your child ever to see you again." Steele, with difficulty, kept his voice to a matter-of-fact evenness.

"Don't tell me I'm a martyr, Robert—please don't," she begged him. "Because I'm not that. I loved Heathen and I gave her up. I'll never see her

any more—and it hurts me a whole lot sometimes."

There were tears in her eyes now, but she blinked them back and forged doggedly ahead.

"You and I know what I am, though—and we know I've come out most as well as I deserved. Now the baby's got nobody around her that isn't good; she can't choose but be good herself. I've accomplished that much. Suppose I'd waited for a decent divorce: how can we tell what would have happened by then? The devil in me would have got the upper hand and I might have insisted on having Heathen some part of the time. A few weeks, a year of me—and where would she have ended, Robert?" She shook her head vigorously. "Oh, I've done the sensible thing, and you can't dispute it," she decided.

"You've done the splendid thing, child," Steele said, without any attempt at present to steady his husky voice.

Flora put a restraining hand over his mouth. "Please don't!" she cautioned him again. They smiled into each other's misty eyes.

"Well!" Releasing him, she got to her feet, brisk and business-like once

more—even a trifle apologetic. "Now I *must* go. Oh!" A sudden thought struck her. "I wish you'd see Heathen as much as you possibly can, Robert. You have a charm—an adorable way about you—that Peter lacks. Teach it to Heathen, that's a dear!"

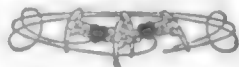
"Nonsense, Flora!" Steele protested. "But of course I'll see her every chance I get."

"Good!" She nodded her approval. "Now just *one* other thing! Ask Peter to give you my tea-set, will you? Heathen may get into a destructive mood some day and smash everything. It will be safer with you. Then, when I come to call on you, Robert, we can use it." She gave him her brightest smile. "That will be jolly—eh? You'll never be able to lose me. I'll still be popping in on you at the most unseasonable times."

Raising herself up on her toes, she lifted her mouth expectantly to his.

"I shall always be waiting for you, Flora," Steele told her, after he had kissed her. "I'm homesick now at the thought of that trip around the world."

"Around and around and *around!*" she corrected. "Not just once, Robert. Good-bye!"



Chiaroscuro

By Oscar Williams

I

WHERE the earth, rain-sparred and glittering, dips
Its keel into the black waters of oblivion,
There is a phosphorescence and a light.

II

My hours are symphonies of leaves and cobblestones:
The winds are clapping the shutters of the world
Like waves at sea;
The winds are wakening the elder music of the trees;
The winds are tearing from the full mountains
The grandeur of their muteness.

The Test

By Logan Trumbull

SMITHERS might have been a celebrity, instead of a mere rich man.

His was an ability that might have shaped itself into genius. He could build worlds from words, happy, colorful worlds, or dull pathetic ones.

In his youth he wrote poetry. Sometimes it was published. But Smithers wanted riches, so he wrote advertisements, and prospered.

From his desk he would build a world of woods, cool green woods that wheedled and coaxed the cliff dwellers of cities. He would command the birds to sing, and they would sing. With words as pegs and canvas he would pitch his tent in the foreground. He would kindle his fire. The aroma of coffee would be wafted across the page.

Then he would add a line. He would tell how comfortable the campers were. They were wearing—*Jones Socks!*

Or from those same words Smithers would build another world. A ballroom; soft, plaintive music; lights, color and laughter. Harlequin was swinging across the floor with his Columbine. Romeo sat between his Juliet and an

interloping Carmen. But Carmen was the attraction. Why?

Smithers would add that line.

Because she wore *Porus Kick Underwear*. Even after the strenuous dancing she was still cool and confident.

For twenty years Smithers wrote those advertisements, and prospered. He gained a fortune, an ornate home and a beautiful wife. But in all those twenty years, Smithers had never written a last line without shuddering.

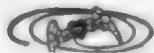
Then came the twenty-first year. Smithers worked late one night. He wrote the last line on a health advertisement, and waited for the shudder. It failed to come. Instead, Smithers laughed.

He dismissed his chauffeur at the door, walked into the house, shot his wife and set fire to the place.

The police found him in front of St. Timothy's church, pitching cobblestones through the stained glass windows. On the way to the station he tried to smash the face of the prettiest lady in the patrol wagon.



THE trouble with most wives is that they keep forgetting that they ought to forget.





—by Adrian

JETTA GOUDAL

The Girl Who Was Always a Star—Jetta Goudal

By Joel Harkness

With this sketch of Miss Jetta Goudal, THE SMART SET begins a series of articles about certain venturers of the arts to whom recognition is due.

In the wings of theatres, in the studios of the metropolis, at easels, bent over desks and typewriters, men and women work today who tomorrow will be famous. Already recognition of early promise has been granted many of them.

They are hammering and chipping at marble till it breathes the breath of life. They are conceiving straight and lovely edifices that one day will soar over the city's traffic. They are building drama to stir the night crowds of the land. They are nursing the flame of beauty and power to delight the ears and eyes of men. Some have worked long, some have come to fame "overnight," some have won by beauty, some by genius, some by sheer force.

It is THE SMART SET's aim to tell the true story of these successes and to try to account for them in heralding their progress. Figures of brilliant promise rather than of long-established renown are the subjects the series will deal with.

AS this is being written, Miss Jetta Goudal, hardly more than six months known to the screen, steps into the effulgence of the klieglights as a star in her own right. She is now at work in her first leading role.

The Goudal, slender, foreign, poignantly beautiful, a newcomer in the studios, is a figure of mystery. To be sure, the story of her immediate career—amazingly vivid for so little actual achievement—is known. All New York has been discussing her. And occasionally—very occasionally—in conversation, she lifts a moment the veil that she swathes about the circumstances of her life. A little glimpse stands out and glows an instant—a vignette of some foreign capital—a momentary picture

of a young girl sitting enthralled at a concert—a child petulantly fleeing from her governess down a sun-chequered promenade.

But about the later years—notably the years of the war—she is silent. And in that silence, one would say, lies much of the intensity of Jetta Goudal, much of the sultry magic that seems to endue her acting.

Miss Goudal's first motion-picture work was done less than a year ago. The picture was one of slum life in a New England city. Those who saw it with critical eyes observed that it seemed to pause midway. It halted at an episode, dramatic in itself, which concerned a young slum mother and her baby. The episode did not advance the

picture's action particularly. It was color. It was a stage aside. But it revealed acting which in the director's mind justified him in reeling off many feet of film in spite of the danger of the picture's temporary stagnation. The director's belief was shared by those who saw it.

Those who saw it pondered who the slight, poignant figure was. The actress was unnamed in the cast. She appeared at a moment in the film, performed her sympathetic and moving five minutes of action, and was gone. The picture proceeded to its end, and those who looked for the reappearance of the little slum mother were disappointed. She, to be sure, was Miss Goudal. The episode was her test, and it was the fore-runner of triumph.

Presently Miss Goudal played as Pilar de Lima in the screened version of Hergesheimer's novel, "The Bright Shawl." That picture was publicly viewed last April. She followed it in August with the portrayal of a minor role with George Arliss in the picture taken from William Archer's play, "The Green Goddess." Such is the chronicle of Miss Goudal's actual screen appearances. On the strength of them she is now a featured player, and her place among eminent actresses, in the opinion of many who should know, is not distant.

II

LET this prediction be documented:

There is as fierce disparagement of motion-picture acting in certain criticism as there is of stage acting. Miss Goudal, playing the sinister adventuress, half Chinese, half Continental, "stole the press" on the opening of "The Bright Shawl." A lily-petal of a girl, slight, impassive, languorous, blossoming at moments in a blaze of fury—the part called for her to knife a man, and more of that later—she held the premiere crowd with singular unanimity. There were those who said in print that she should have been cast as La Clavel, the dancer from Spain, about whom the fable was woven.

There was a good deal of expectancy, then, when it was announced that she was cast as the Ayah in "The Green Goddess." Her achievement in this "bit" was perhaps more remarkable than in her former one. In that picture Miss Goudal was on the screen not ten minutes. No title of any sort aided her in her playing. She was not called on to speak a word as part of the picture's action.

You who saw the play or the cinema version will remember that the Rajah of Rukh, an obscure native province in the Himalayas, made himself the host of an English party dumped into his country by the fall of an airplane. His guests were unwilling ones, cornered in a mountainous land of ferocious and inimical peasantry. The Rajah, an urbane, English-bred prince, disguised the evil purposes he held under a suave courtesy. The object of his designs was the English woman who was one of the party.

The Ayah's first appearance was when the Rajah summoned her to conduct the English woman to an apartment set aside for her in the palace. Compulsion was swathed in the Rajah's politeness. But the Ayah, receiving from her lord his command, merely bowed to the Englishwoman, and bowed with a low gesture of the hand, palm-up, indicating the way to the chamber. That bow and gesture accompanied by a single flash of a glance conveyed the order the Rajah would not deign even to imply. It conveyed more. It conveyed hatred, jealousy, a premonition of the fate in store for the woman she was ostensibly to serve.

The Englishwoman was conquered by the glance as completely as by any possible force. She stepped to the door. The Ayah quietly followed her, and that was all. But the episode was breath-taking in its authenticity.

There is no veiling of success in so popular a field of endeavor as the cinema. Miss Goudal became a figure in metropolitan life, as they say, "overnight." At premieres, on the street, at Pierre's at tea, the glances that had

hitherto been puzzled—Miss Goudal's beauty overrules courtesy, and belongs in the realm of absolute, not comparative, knowledge—were now enlightened. "It's Jetta Goudal!"

"Oh! You frightened me so when you killed that man! Oh! It was awful!"

A pair of rounded eyes, in which terror seemed to remain still, gazed at Pilar de Lima—in a smart afternoon gown—from behind a department store counter. There was no mistaking the abject fright in the child's face. She saw through Miss Goudal the venomous Pilar, and the tribute to the actress was instantaneous.

"I only kill people when they don't show me lots of pretty gloves," responded Miss Goudal. The child flew.

III

ABOUT the orgulous and splendid palace of the Grand Monarque at Versailles stretches a terrain of stately gardens. Gardens that carry the eye down pillared terraces and expanses of satin lawns, studded with fountains whose dolphins stare goggle-eyed at laughing mermaids as they spout rainbows. Beyond stretches to almost fabulous length a marble-framed pool. Beyond again are meadows, and these are parapeted with towering trees whose green Corot loved to paint.

Here all France—all the world, for that matter—comes to view the measured grandeurs of another day, and here, in the park, children play. It was not a score of years ago that Jetta Goudal paced there, a demure child, beside her governess. So much we know.

We know that the little girl, who was born in Holland, moved presently to Versailles, and that her life was a sheltered one. We know that people turned to look again at the tiny pallid face with the great eyes and the mobile little mouth; at the dainty nose even today almost babyish; at the slender, stripling body. . . . But the scene presently changes, and we find her at a concerto in Paris; and in other capitals—London, Berlin and Brussels.

Then the curtain that Miss Goudal slightly lifted for this interviewer descended again in a red billow. This was war. What it was that confronted her out of that desolating time we were not told. We know it was a remorselessly bitter thing, and one surmises it involved a material change in her affairs. It was at that time that Miss Goudal came to New York, leaving behind perhaps nothing but memories. . . .

The rest is quickly told—appearances in repertoire where she gained invaluable experience and a further grasp of English; a *succès d'estime* in those matinee performances of "The Hero" that set the critics talking two springs ago; an appearance in "The Elton Case" and in another play. Then came the producer's offer of the tiny part of the slum mother, and then her voyage to Havana to play Pilar.

For the record it may further be noted that Miss Goudal lives in New York in an incongruously plain and quiet old hotel in the Twenties, a step from Fifth Avenue. This has been her home for five years.

IV

HER success has actually surprised Jetta Goudal. That is not hearsay, but knowledge.

Yet, viewed with detachment, her success is not in the least astonishing. It is quite normal. She would seem without question to have been born to be a star.

There is reason for this deduction. Miss Goudal brings facilities to the screen quite apart from the not uncommon one of beauty. She brings a quality of mind that is rare. She thinks with clarity. Her observation is obviously based on no small cultivation, and it is unblinded by egotism. She has the power of sympathy. It is her understanding out of which she builds the characters she portrays. She has an equipment of features and body without peer to express what she finds to express, and there is in her a quality of emotion that would seem to be as gen-

nine as her work has evidenced itself to be.

This fortunate combination is the stuff that stars should be made of.

To say that Miss Goudal is surprised at her success is not to say that she is astonished at it. It is its celerity that startles her. It is probably untrue that she ever—since her arrival in this country five years ago—has doubted she would be a star some day. It was probably as inevitable to her as it has lately seemed to others.

"I have played my parts as if they were star parts," she says. "If I do not *know* how they must be played, I cannot play them."

That remark may have considerable significance in accounting for Miss Goudal's present position.

V

THE Goudal lightened the musty corridors of her chosen hostelry like an opal in a stone pile. A slight figure, all eyes, she was gracious and—apologetic for being late.

Condoned with the interviewer for failing to report Miss Goudal's costume. Her features hold the attention so exclusively. Her hat—a velvet mushroom arrangement—was noticeable, to be sure, but that primarily because it veiled her eyes.

Miss Goudal's face is a Benda mask of curious beauty. Every feature but the eyes is tiny. Her carmined lips are cut short just as they sweep into the outer curve of a Cupid's bow. Her nose is little and childlike. Set widely in a moulded plane are her eyes, but all the words about eyes have been said. Mobility and animation are the unique qualities of this face.

Certain attributes that are the property of the artist are Miss Goudal's. She has a reliance on her own capacity that is not to be confounded with conceit. She has simplicity, sensitiveness.

What the artist honestly believes is what the artist works with. The fact that certain formulas of acting are "hokum" to the uncreating critic does not reduce their value to the actor who uses them. Miss Goudal staunchly affirms that tenet of faith which is as old as the mummers of Thebes: "When I act a person, I *am* that person. I live her life, I feel her feelings, I die her death."

Thus Miss Goudal. It is probably true that this principle motivates her work. It would seem to be successful with her. There is a ring of authenticity about Miss Goudal's acting that must have its origin in some such faith. One cannot cavil with the way artistic expression is accomplished, so long as the accomplishment appears genuine. By all means let Miss Goudal continue killing enemies with a Cuban dagger, and bowing Englishwomen to their impending doom with the black heart of a little Himalayan ayah. Let her be, temporarily, a slum mother with a baby at her breast. Let her be other romantic and engaging persons.

One bit of vivid comprehension came from Miss Goudal. She was defending the cinema as a medium for the actor.

"On the stage," she said, "you have your voice, your living body, the perpetual explanation of dialogue, and the chance for climaxes of words. On the screen you have nothing but your thought."

"The only thing that goes over on the screen must be your thought," said Miss Goudal. "If you think a thing hard enough, it becomes real to the audience—and you have no other way of making it real."

Let some of the bathing beauties ponder this text.

The second article in the series will be an interview with Gilbert Emery, playwright and actor, by Norbert Lusk. It will appear in the February number.



Yo-Ho-Ho and a Bottle of Rum

By Marjory Stoneman Douglas

I

IT was the perfection of his perfectness which from the very first moment curled with suspicion the delicate nostril of Narcissa Spink-Sprague.

He stood, the complete aristocrat, silhouetted just one dramatic instant at the top of those three steps which lead from the lobby of the hotel Royal Poincianna into the dim green depths of the Palm Room. She sat, a very patrician figure indeed, slim and young and frosty, superior to everything but the pleased ruddy face of her stepfather, at their table, a bright splash of light at the other end of the room.

At that very moment the older man dropped the hotel bulletin (in which he had pounced upon the notice that he, E. J. Sprague, owner of the Sprague Grocerias of Akron, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha, had purchased the smart yacht "Sea Lark," then at anchor in Lake Worth) and stared.

"Look, Narcissa," he said, fumbling with his glasses, "that's John Brassington, the young man everybody has been asking about. The room clerk won't say much about him—guess he's got his orders, but if he isn't one of the biggest bugs in New York I'll miss my guess. Look at the way his Tux—er—his dinner coat sets. Keeps himself absolutely to himself—won't talk to anybody. And the way he spends his money is regal, my dear,

regal. You can talk about Boston, honey, but when it comes to right bang-up toplofticalness, you've got to hand it to New York. Look at him now."

And Narcissa, forgetting for once the dictum that a gentlewoman does not stare, did so.

Then the Brassington, descending with all the abandon of a young pyramid, clothed in thunders and what the well-dressed man is wearing, singled out the royal table, sat down, and put his elbows on it. Waiters, more waiters than have ever been seen in all Palm Beach, swam to him, dipping and rising in the green light like porpoises in an aquarium. And he, having signified his desire in the matter of food, sat, very much *en profile* to them, with the manner of one in some vasty desert communing with forgotten kings.

When he picked up the hotel bulletin, a copy of the same one that E. J. clutched, Narcissa could tell that E. J. was thrilled. He had not been her stepfather for three years for nothing. And she knew what affected him. Never, since he had been bitten with this idea of sowing his rolled oats among the upper classes, and had broken out with light spats and baggy golf knickers and fuzzy English hats for what Narcissa called his "dear silly old head"—had he seen anyone so exactly his aristocratic ideal.

He had married Narcissa's mother.

But the aristocracy of the Adamses and of the Spinks of Pinckney Street, Boston, while aving him, was too frosty, too fragile for him. Brassington was something he could get hold of—a full-bodied superiority which consisted in impressing people visibly, in spending money without heed, in looking at people as if they did not exist. It was the sort of thing that E. J. Sprague always wished that he was not too “darned soft” to attempt.

If it had been anyone else but E. J., Narcissa would have thought this intolerable. But E. J. was different. Even her frigid old Grandmother Spink had not prevented Narcissa from being able to value E. J.’s comfortable absence from all false pride. He was himself, and she adored him, adored everything about him except his inability to judge persons.

As in the case of this Brassington person. To her Brassington was merely theatrical. The way he sat was theatrical. The way he turned the pages of the bulletin was theatrical. And when she looked up a little later at a murmur from E. J. and found the Brassington actually bowing to them, his sudden recognition seemed nearly bad taste.

But E. J. beamed. He indicated a vacant place at his table with a sweep of his hand and the Brassington rose and moved toward them, the eyes of the diners moving with him.

He bowed over Narcissa’s hand, like an actor’s idea of a Grand Duke and she was delighted to find that he made the same bad impression. Worse.

“Charmed, of course,” he said. “I have admired Miss Narcissa fervently from a distance.” And the undertone of his voice went curving up and down.

When he lifted his head and looked her full in the eyes for the first time, she had a little shock. Because he wasn’t much older than she was. His

face was ruddy and boyish and his eyes were clear grey.

But what startled her was that for a moment they seemed to look like the eyes of a lost puppy. She thought it must have been the lights.

Then he sat down and she ignored him. No one had a right to make her feel so confused.

Suddenly she caught what he was saying to E. J.

“A gentleman,” he said, “can do anything.”

E. J. agreed, a little fulsomely. Evidently he was remembering that he had started as a grocery clerk.

“And so I ventured to speak to you, because I could see at once that you were the kind of big business man whose mind is constantly three jumps ahead of the youngsters who think they know everything.”

E. J. expanded even more. For if there was one thing he prided himself on it was his ability to keep moving with the young ones, sir, pep, snap, class, modernity and gusto, by gum. Whatever this person wanted he had with shrewd precision taken exactly the right course.

“I needn’t beat around the bush,” he said. “I see you’ve bought the ‘Sea Lark.’ I want you to let me use her to bring in a cargo of liquor from the Bahamas. Besides meaning really big money to you I can promise you the friendship of some very prominent New York people. I am in complete control of a group of the sort of people who attend to the minor details. But I must have your ‘Sea Lark.’ And rather than offer you the money, which I know you don’t want, I am asking you to come in with us on the deal.”

II

So that was it. A bootlegger. The haughtily charming profile of Narcissa Spink-Sprague became suddenly a full face of horrified affront. Her delicate eye-brows almost disappeared in the wave of soft inky hair

which swept straight back from her smooth forehead. The cool brightness of her eyes went ice-blue and if the small mouth had not been so obviously a Spink mouth it would have opened wide with horror and round with shock. As it was it went as stiff as so curving a means of expression can be said to be stiff. She had known it all along. He was not only an impostor but a criminal. How unspeakably vulgar. She glanced at E. J.

He was chewing his cigar. She knew what that meant. The person had actually made the right approach to the really brilliant imagination which, on a fine honest foundation, had made the Sprague Groceries worth three millions. And he had touched E. J.'s hunger for youth and for aristocracy.

She rose with the little haughty motion of the shoulders which her Grandmother Spink employed when matters were really quite too impossible.

"Don't you find it warm here," she murmured, in a voice as brittle and tinkling as an icicle. "Shan't we go on the veranda?"

But all the way across the lobby, with male footsteps following the silver flowing of her very smart skirts, she was thinking hard. Out on the long porch, which runs down to the Coconut Grove and a glimpse of moonlit bay, she refused a chair, after the Brassington had been ten minutes bringing it, and perched on the railing, her small head very high, her fingers quiet in her lap as a gentlewoman's should be, no matter what feeling is crisping their slender tips. The men settled themselves with much elaborate scratching of matches and proffering of lights.

The Brassington began again.

"You understand, of course, Mr. Sprague, that it is a very simple matter to bring liquor into this country. Everything has—"

But Narcissa cut him short. "You really can't be going to put any faith in what this person says, are you, E.

J." she drawled, with the Spink eyebrows arched and almost invisible. "I never heard of anything so preposterous. Anyone who uses a broad 'a' in the word 'and' is hardly dependable, I think. And the importation of liquor is not only against the law but it's — it's dreadfully *bourgeois*."

There was a sudden electric pause. John Brassington went rigid. E. J. chewed his cigar. Then he cocked his head and folded his hands comfortably over the bulge in his vest.

"Well now, honey," he said quietly, "maybe this young man would have something to say to that."

Narcissa said, "I really see no necessity for listening to him. And yet if he insists, I suppose he has some proof of his pretensions to being a—well—a gentleman."

The moonlight was bright enough to reveal the dull color which crept over John Brassington's cheekbones. He said stiffly, "Just what is your idea of proof?"

She swung a silver slipper and looked him over coolly.

"Do you take ice in your Chablis?"

"I—I beg pardon?" he said startled.

"I said, do you take ice in your Chablis?"

"I—er—why—yes, of course."

"Hm," she said. "How extraordinary. It is utterly ruined unless served slightly warmed. When is it proper not to eat asparagus with the fingers?"

He stirred restlessly in his chair. "This funny business isn't getting us anywhere—"

"He doesn't know" went on her inexorable small voice. "Which is served with chicken,—burgundy or sauterne?"

"Mr. Sprague, really—"

"He doesn't know. Do you say 'as he does' or 'like he does'?"

There was a dignified silence.

"He doesn't know. Is Botticelli a sauce or a cheese? He doesn't know. Who painted Swinburne? He doesn't."

know. When did Homer write the Divine Comedy? He doesn't know. What does 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' mean? He doesn't know. Is there anything," she paused, "with which men of culture are familiar that you do happen to know?"

More silence.

"This ought to settle the matter, I think. He is obviously an impostor."

John Brassington rose and towered over her small figure perched white and superior, on the railing.

But before he could express the words that were choking him, there was a rumbling snort from E. J. that might have been surprise or vexation but sounded suspiciously like laughter. He, too, stood up, but he spoke directly to the other man, with a bit of rasp in his voice.

"Young man," he said, "There may be something in what you say. But as my little girl—er—reminds me, I don't know you and you're asking a lot of me. I don't mind saying that I'm interested. Maybe you are what you say you are, and maybe not. Perhaps we had better let you prove it. But my idea of proof is a bit different. Suppose you produce a few goods first. If you are so powerful as you say you are, it won't be crowding you much to have your man deliver me sixty cases of baccardi rum for my own use, say, by tomorrow. How about it?"

The Brassington stared straight over Narcissa's smooth shining head.

"That's rather short notice, sir," he said.

"It isn't notice. I'm calling you" snapped E. J. "Take it or leave it."

There was a pause.

"Right, sir, I'll take it," said the Brassington in a voice that cracked like a whip.

"Well, well, Narcissa, my dear," said E. J. suddenly and good humoredly, "I must go up and see how your mother's headache is. I bid you youngsters good-night."

And he trotted off, and there they were.

III

THE Brassington stood looking out toward the water. It was getting later and whole strings of colored lights in the Coconut Grove were blinking out. The wind was stirring the palm fronds uneasily. Narcissa slipped to her feet with a little murmur and would have passed him, but somehow he was in her way. So she stood, confronting him. He looked down at her.

"That was a clever stunt you pulled," he said simply.

"Thanks. I really guessed the first moment I saw you."

"Guessed what?"

"What—er—you really are."

"Well, what am I?"

"That's obvious enough, isn't it? An adventurer, trying to be a gentleman adventurer, and trying too hard?"

"And I suppose nobody is good enough for you even to look at unless he fits your narrow little aristocratic standards?"

"That's hardly the question, is it? I shall have to ask you to let me pass."

"Not yet. You see, in spite of you I'm going to put this thing over."

"You think so."

"I know so."

"You have more self-confidence than—manners."

"Manners be damned. Do you imagine for a minute I'm going to let a flapper with a Boston accent and an icy eye get in my way?"

She drew back a little, looking him up and down swiftly.

"Who are you, anyway?"

"You know my name," he said shortly. "It happens to be my own. And Homer didn't write the Divine Comedy. You see I was brought up by a wealthy aunt who kidded me along with thinking I was to be her heir. She sent me to college, along with a lot of great expectations. She died awhile ago. Forgot to make a will. I got exactly one thousand dollars. Consequently, here I am. Can't

work, don't know how, and don't want to. Got a smashed rib in the navy and was laid up so long with it that my head went funny. Couldn't learn anything or get a job or please anybody. Nobody gives a hang what happens and I don't either. I don't suppose you know that they jail you for trying to commit suicide. So when I got this thousand and found it was all there was to be, in spite of everything she'd promised, I made up my mind I would get rich quick through the blessed institution of prohibition. Long live Mr. Volstead."

"But not by swindling my stepdad."

"Who said swindling? I've got to have his boat. Listen. You don't understand. I've got to have it. I've got ten dollars left in the world. And the bootleg game is sewed up so tight you can't break in without real coin. Unless you have the money to go to Nassau or Gun Key and buy direct you haven't got a chance. It's a darn dangerous game, with the rum pirates getting by with murder outside the law."

"But you said you were controlling these people. You said—"

"That," said the Brassington simply, "is where I lied. Why I—why—I'm not even on the inside enough to get credit for those sixty cases." He caught himself up a bit as if he realized how much his tone had changed, but then went on with a rueful laugh, "Lady, I am but a humble amateur in the new piracy and I give you the word of a mere bootlegger-elect that if I even had the money to buy just one of your stepdad's sixty cases I would weep tears of meek, if criminal, gratitude."

"Really," said Narcissa stiffly, after a queer little pause, "You can't expect me to be interested in the history of your failure. Please let me pass."

"Failure? Who said failure? I said I was too broke to buy them. But that doesn't prevent my getting them, you can bet your life, as long as there are three or four healthy bootleggers

not forty miles from here that I can get those cases from."

"How?"

"Pounding them to a jelly."

"I never heard of anything more utterly disgraceful in my life" she blazed at him. "And you expect my stepfather, mine, to be mixed up in this common—" Something in his face stopped her short.

He leaned down and looked straight into her eyes and his words came slowly and very, very distinctly—"Girls like you make me sick. You haven't got an idea in your head. You have been wrapped up in cotton wool all your life, with a few little precise formulae instead of brains. You've never had anything hard or beastly or hurting come within a mile of you. You're not good for a single thing on earth except to hang clothes on. And then you stick up your pretty little ignorant nose at the bloody struggle of the men who've kept the food in your mouth all your life long. And you call that common. Pah! You aren't even worth spanking." And he turned on his heel swiftly and made for the steps.

The frothy white figure of Narcissa Spink-Sprague stood paralyzed with an emotion that was nothing short of passion. Nobody had been allowed to say such things to her in the entire twenty-two years of her life. It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Something beneath her shattered sense of aristocracy, of superiority began boiling up, hot and overwhelming. She forgot that a gentlewoman is never supposed to be angry. All the careful surveillance of her grandmother Spink, exerted against "the Spink temper" was overpowered, overwhelmed, swept instantly away. And there was left only Narcissa, a white breathless hurricane, that went raging down the long steps just as John Brassington jumped into his car and made the beginning whine of his starter echo down the empty drive.

She would have caught him then

know. When did Homer write the Divine Comedy? He doesn't know. What does 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' mean? He doesn't know. Is there anything," she paused, "with which men of culture are familiar that you do happen to know?"

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She drew back a little, looking him up and down swiftly.

"Who are you, anyway?"

"You know my name," he said shortly. "It happens to be my own. And Homer didn't write the Divine Comedy. You see I was brought up by a wealthy aunt who kidded me along with thinking I was to be her heir. She sent me to college, along with a lot of great expectations. She died awhile ago. Forgot to make a will. I got exactly one thousand dollars. Consequently, here I am. Can't

work, don't know how, and don't want to. Got a smashed rib in the navy and was laid up so long with it that my head went funny. Couldn't learn anything or get a job or please anybody. Nobody gives a hang what happens and I don't either. I don't suppose you know that they jail you for trying to commit suicide. So when I got this thousand and found it was all there was to be, in spite of everything she'd promised, I made up my mind I would get rich quick through the blessed institution of prohibition. Long live Mr. Volstead."

"But not by swindling my stepdad."

"Who said swindling? I've got to have his boat. Listen. You don't understand. I've got to have it. I've got ten dollars left in the world. And the bootleg game is sewed up so tight you can't break in without real coin. Unless you have the money to go to Nassau or Gun Key and buy direct you haven't got a chance. It's a darn dangerous game, with the rum pirates getting by with murder outside the law."

"But you said you were controlling these people. You said—"

"That," said the Brassington simply, "Is where I lied. Why I—why—I'm not even on the inside enough to get credit for those sixty cases." He caught himself up a bit as if he realized how much his tone had changed, but then went on with a rueful laugh, "Lady, I am but a humble amateur in the new piracy and I give you the word of a mere bootlegger-elect that if I even had the money to buy just one of your stepdad's sixty cases I would weep tears of meek, if criminal, gratitude."

"Really," said Narcissa stiffly, after a queer little pause, "You can't expect me to be interested in the history of your failure. Please let me pass."

"Failure? Who said failure? I said I was too broke to buy them. But that doesn't prevent my getting them, you can bet your life, as long as there are three or four healthy bootleggers

not forty miles from here that I can get those cases from."

"How?"

"Pounding them to a jelly."

"I never heard of anything more utterly disgraceful in my life" she blazed at him. "And you expect my stepfather, mine, to be mixed up in this common—" Something in his face stopped her short.

He leaned down and looked straight into her eyes and his words came slowly and very, very distinctly—"Girls like you make me sick. You haven't got an idea in your head. You have been wrapped up in cotton wool all your life, with a few little precise formulae instead of brains. You've never had anything hard or beastly or hurting come within a mile of you. You're not good for a single thing on earth except to hang clothes on. And then you stick up your pretty little ignorant nose at the bloody struggle of the men who've kept the food in your mouth all your life long. And you call that common. Pah! You aren't even worth spanking." And he turned on his heel swiftly and made for the steps.

The frothy white figure of Narcissa Spink-Sprague stood paralyzed with an emotion that was nothing short of passion. Nobody had been allowed to say such things to her in the entire twenty-two years of her life. It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Something beneath her shattered sense of aristocracy, of superiority began boiling up, hot and overwhelming. She forgot that a gentlewoman is never supposed to be angry. All the careful surveillance of her grandmother Spink, exerted against "the Spink temper" was overpowered, overwhelmed, swept instantly away. And there was left only Narcissa, a white breathless hurricane, that went raging down the long steps just as John Brassington jumped into his car and made the beginning whine of his starter echo down the empty drive.

She would have caught him then

but the silver lace of her skirt caught on a nail. She tore it off savagely. By racing over the lawn she came up to him at the turn of the drive, just as he slammed his clutch into third. He looked up, startled, as a disheveled girl, sobbing half for lack of breath and half for rage, jerked his door open and tumbled into the seat beside him.

"Lord," he said, and his brakes screamed as the car stopped. "Well, what's this for?"

"Go on," she said through her shut teeth.

"You're crazy," he said. "Get out."

"I won't.—You said—you said I wasn't—any good. I'm going to—show you—whether I'm any good—or not. I'm going to spoil your party. I'm going to make you—fail. You shan't put it over my stepdad. I won't—let you—by—"

"Oh, don't be funny," he said equably. "Go on. Run home like a good little girl and don't bother me. I'll take back anything I ever said. Honest. But can't you see—I'm going to be busy?"

The white figure beside him still panted a little, but she turned an eye on him that gleamed balefully.

"You can drop it now—or you can drop it later. It's all the same to me. Only I'm going to spoil it for you, if it's the only thing I ever do."

He laughed shortly. "Listen, I may aspire to criminal riches but I don't take girls to murder parties. Now get out."

"If you try to put me out of this car I'll scream until the whole hotel is roused. You seem to think this is a joke. I tell you I mean it. I'm going to prevent your getting that stuff. Understand?"

He paused a minute, staring at her. A queer little gleam crept into his eyes. "All right," he said shortly, and slammed in his clutch. Then they were purring through the inky shadows of trees on the road to the beach, with only a few gleams from

upstairs windows in the darkened houses that they passed. Suddenly they came upon the enormous bosom of the ocean, silver and surging, and a vast salt wind struck their faces and roared in their ears. Abruptly, he stopped the car again to consult a road map. The moon was going down. He looked at it thoughtfully.

"Maybe you'd like to know," he said calmly. "They're going to unload a schooner from Nassau after the moon sets. It's about forty miles down the coast. Got to make time. You'll have to make it snappy, lady, if you're going to gum up this little party. From now on I crave action. Let's go."

Then he began to drive.

IV

THE beach road south from Palm Beach runs for miles like a cat on a ridge pole, between the enormous expanse of ocean on the one side and a low, rounding barrier of scrub palmetto and coco-plum and sea grape on the other. White and hard it runs, at first dipping and curving and soaring, but then settling down to one long, hungry reach, south and south and south, mile after mile after mile. And when it finally turns inland a little way it exchanges the constant accompanying ocean for the straight thrust of railroad tracks, and goes looping back and forth across the slender steels, through little villages of grey slab shacks and past occasional trim bungalows, through tunnels of trees that spring into sudden livid green about you, the road a blank white streak leaping and leaping before the stabbed daggers of your headlights.

That way, he drove. To Narcissa he seemed iron. His bulk beside her was as fixed and immovable as rock. The road roared and the wind tore and worried them, leaping and bay-ing like hounds. The small car shook and slid and rocked. Her feet were braced and her grip was numb on

the side of the car. But he was motionless, granite, except for the thrust and jerk of one long arm at the brake as he locked wheels and skidded, hardly slackening speed, around the turns.

She had prided herself on being pretty nervy. She could make a car do things herself. But she found herself curling her toes and shutting her eyes as they plunged toward the white notice boards that marked each railroad crossing and each turn. They would snap out of the dark ahead and flash toward the car, and she could feel in him no indication that he saw them. But the brakes would grind, she could feel the car skidding and then recover. And almost before she could open her eyes again the car would have picked up its regular, implacable, relentless, driving roar.

She watched the dial. The indicator only quivered and settled on fifty-five. The speed and the wind made a sort of monotony, after a while. Her eyes fastened, glazed and hypnotized, on the road plunging under the white glare of the spotlight. It seemed as if he had been hurling them through the black landscape for hours and hours and hours, always. There was nothing left in the world but roar and rush and rattle and sway and the long howling of his horn on the crossroads.

And then suddenly the car stopped. There was no shock, only an immense cessation. He snapped the lights off, reached for a cigarette, cracked a match on his thumbnail, lit his cigarette, puffed three times, and settled back comfortably.

"Listen," he said.

She stopped uncurling her cold toes. The silence rang in her ears. There were the usual night sounds, a cricket in the bush, a whip-will's-widow whistling mournfully somewhere, and from the south the long, far, windy squeal of a train. But there was something nearer, on the road ahead, growing fainter.

S. S.—Jan.—4

"Why, it's only a truck," she said, and was surprised to find herself glad of the chance to talk.

"But what kind of truck?"

She shook her head.

"This is a nice, noisy bootleg truck, my implacable young friend," he said. "What did you think we were pursuing?"

She said she hadn't thought. It was all that she could think of to say just then.

"You didn't think, surely, that you and I, hand in hand, were going to board that schooner and bring along those fifty cases slung around our necks," and he laughed happily, as if the drive and the coming excitement had lifted him clean out of his former mood.

"You see," he went on seriously, to her speechless astonishment at being regarded as a partner in the enterprise, "here's the situation. Half a mile ahead is a little settlement from which a road leads, at right angles to this one, across the swamp to the peninsula and the beach. Off there somewhere the schooner has anchored and they have been landing cases of booze by small boats to the sand. There they load the truck, and the thing is done."

"But the police," she said. She couldn't help it.

"Well, there's many a weary mile of sandy beach between Jacksonville and Miami. And the prohibition agents would have to be as thick as sand fleas. And they aren't. If some honest ones should happen to stumble on this bunch there would be a pretty fight. But if they weren't honest they might take shares. That would be a lot more peaceful for everyone."

"Oh do—do give it up," she blazed out suddenly. "It's too utterly disgraceful."

"Listen, child," he said grimly. "I've thought of everything and it's too late now. I'm not going to quit until I've come out on top, see? I've been a fool long enough. Hereafter, what I want, I take. Hear? It's my

night to howl—oh gee, I say, you're frozen. I am a rotter. Here, stand up."

She was shivering, but it wasn't with cold. It was pure excitement. She was still angry with him. But the ride had somehow impressed her with the difficulties in her way. She felt suddenly smaller. She stood up quietly and he put his dinner coat around her and buttoned her in, with the starlight on his slab of white shirt front. He was a long time fixing the buttons, she thought.

Then, far off, there was faint sound on the road. He straightened up.

"Jove," he said. "It's the truck coming back."

He sat down and started the car.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered.

He didn't answer until he had backed the little car around, rear wheels into the bushes but heading up the road, north.

"Now listen," he said. "You can drive a car, can't you? Well, if anything happens, goes wrong, you understand, or if you get frightened or you hear me yell 'Go,' you yank the car out of here and drive like hell home. Don't bother about me, see? I can't have you mixed up in this." And he stepped out, shut the door and stood in the road, in his shirt sleeves. The distant sounds were a little clearer. He walked slowly down the middle of the road.

Then he suddenly turned and dashed back to her. "Gosh, why did I ever let you get into this? Here, take this, just in case anything bothers you."

He was off down the road again, leaving her staring after him, a heavy army revolver in her hand. His gun. And he was walking empty handed down the road. The truck was already humming like a great beetle crawling up the road to them. And she had sworn she would make him fail.

She opened the door and stood by it, dancing with excitement. But she

didn't leave it. She didn't know what he was going to do. Or what she was, either.

V

THEN the truck was thundering and jarring not a hundred yards away. Its searchlight flashed on blindingly. Half way to it she could see, sharp black, the big figure of John Brassington walking full into it, his hands waving above his head.

"What's the matter with you?" a voice shouted, and the truck ground to a full stop. Its radiator must have been almost touching him. Excited as she was, the picture he must have made to them, disheveled, with a white glare of shirt front and that dancing light in his eyes, flashed at her.

"Hey—get out of the way there! What do you want?" the voice shouted again. "What the hell you doing?"

Still black against that light he was certainly acting queerly. His arms were waving and tossing and it seemed as if he reeled. Then he began, but clumsily, to climb up the radiator front.

"Hey, Bill," the voice called, "here's a swell drunk trying to climb over the truck. Come up and take him off, will you?"

A man jumped down from the back of the truck and ran to the front, where he clutched John Brassington by the legs and tried to pull him down. Suddenly the big figure sprawling on the radiator crumpled and rolled off clumsily, but somehow the man was underneath. He shouted, "Hey, guys. C'mere. He—" and his voice was choked off. There was a great scuffling and turmoil in the dust under the lights. She could see nothing but agitated shadows. Something four legged and wriggling rolled over into the dark bushes by the side of the road. There was another shout, muffled again. But not a sound from John.

There must have been three more men on the truck. At first they roared with laughter, shouting and cat-calling. But at the second shout their tones changed. Someone said, "Gee, that drunk's laying Bill out." And then they scrambled and dropped from the high seat of the truck and walked over to the noises in the bushes.

She couldn't help it. She had to see better. And besides, it was unfair. They were four against one, and they probably had guns and she had his. She crouched down in the shadows and ran as near as she dared without being seen. The men were circling cautiously by the side of the road. Somebody switched the searchlight around, so that its full glare was over their shoulders, making the amphitheatre of the bushes leap into white light.

Full in the middle of that light, blinking because of it, John Brassington rose up. His hair was wild. His collar was off, his shirt front smudged with dirt and grass stain, and there was a tiny trickle of brilliant red from one nostril. He loomed for one second, amazing, menacing, before the three men crouching there. There came the stabbing flash of a pistol shot from one of them. He seemed to fade down.

But before her heart had time to beat again, something happened to all three men. Two jumped back, but the third was rolling over in the dust, with John on top of him.

One shouted, "Don't shoot. Grab him." And then the other two dived. And all she could see was a dark, struggling floundering mass of bodies, legs flying here, arms thrashing there, kicking, growling, grasping. Narcissa Spink-Sprague admitted it was a great fight. But John—John—

The shouting stopped. One man was out, crawling away toward the bushes. Then from the mass two rose up, over a dark body. And one

was John. One arm was round the bootlegger's body, the other hand, high over their heads, was straining at the wrist of the hand where a knife flashed. He was trying to twist the wrist and trip his man up at the same time. He was bending him back—and back—

And then something caught John's foot and he stumbled. The man with the knife flashed away. John kicked backward, hard, and as he kicked there was the dull smacking impact of his heel on flesh. The man on the ground groaned. John stepped over him again, carelessly, crouching forward with hands open for the clutch, toward the knife-carrier. He was crouching, too, moving forward, muscle by muscle, like a great cat.

In the glare both figures stood vivid, intense, isolated. The blood that had dripped on John's shirt front was a broad scarlet splash. For the moment the idea sprang in Narcissa's mind that with this as decoration he was a more splendid figure than that other Brassington who had appeared to her at dinner.

Then he sprang. The knife lifted and fell, once, and then went spinning and flashing, up and out of the light. They were swaying and straining together, locked. It seemed an hour. She could hear their horrible, rasping breathing and the whip-will's-widow, still mourning in the dark.

Then, all at once, but as if she had been uneasily conscious of it before, her eye caught something moving, sinister, in the bushes. She peered hard, her heart pounding. Someone was moving there, quietly, intently. Suddenly she knew. It was the other man. And he was crawling toward the knife in the dust by the truck wheel. Just a little more, just one long reach of that lean, black arm—she bit down hard as the picture of that knife flashing across the light straight for John's back jumped into her mind.

There was only one thing to do.

She slid forward, shouting. Hardly conscious of dust and grit and pebbles skinning her cheek and elbows or her chest aching where she landed hard, her fingers closed on that knife hilt. And before the amazed crawling figure could realize it, she was sitting up cross-legged, spitting pebbles but pointing a revolver with both hands firmly and unmistakably at his right eye.

And in the dust of the road, her hair coming down, her silver lace dress just dirty tatters, Narcissa Spink-Sprague snarled viciously—"Put 'em up and keep 'em up. Hear?" and grinned as he rose, waveringly, with his hands clutching air over his astonished face. She scrambled to her feet, backed her man around, and shot a look at John. She caught just one glimpse of his face over the other man's shoulders—sweaty, bloody, gasping and strained with something like a twisted grin.

"Hi-eee!" she squealed shrilly. "Hi-eee! Beat him up, Johnny! Kill him, kill him for me!"

He must have heard. Into his eyes came a sudden glare. Then with one enormous effort he shook himself free, jumped back and swung one mighty, clean, final blow full on the point of the jaw. The man rocked once, and collapsed, like an empty sack.

John shook himself, felt his nose carefully and then looked around, a little dazed. When his eye caught the exultant wreck that was Narcissa, now hopping gleefully on one foot but keeping a wobbly revolver still covering the one remaining bootlegger, his startled face made her blush.

"Well, look who's here," he said slowly. "I thought I told you to go home."

"I didn't. I couldn't. Are you hurt badly? Wasn't it great? Are any of them dead?"

He looked down at the two. "I don't think so. This one's unconscious. He'll come around pretty soon. This one's arm is broken.

There's one in the bushes that isn't very happy, but I don't think I'm exactly a murderer yet. Give us that gun. Hey, you, turn around and show us how tall you are."

"But you can't leave them here like this," she said. "What shall we do?"

They both stopped and looked around. There was a feeling of chill in the wind and the shadows weren't quite so thick. And then from the south they heard another sound, a sort of humming, growing rapidly in the distance.

The surly one with his hands in the air heard it, too.

"That's the other truck coming," he said. "This is where you get yours, you—" But John roared at him to shut up. They stared at each other. Another truck.

"Lord," said John, "I never knew there would be two of them. And there's something happened to my wrist. I can't drive this truck two feet. Hell, what rotten luck."

"Oh, hurry, hurry," she said. "Let's get away from here. I can drive. We can beat a truck in your car." And she pulled him forward, still keeping the man covered. He came slowly. But behind them the other truck was very near, although they couldn't see it.

Suddenly he jerked away from her. "I'm going to get one case, anyway, curse it," he said, and ran to the truck. On the driver's seat was a small one. He lifted it down with one hand, she ran to help him and between them they carried it the thirty-odd yards to his car. It wasn't very heavy.

And then somehow they were in and she was shoving the clutch into third and they were off, before their released bootlegger had time to shout. John sat and swayed a little, tearing a strip off his shirt to bind around his bleeding wrist. She saw that in one glance and then she didn't see anything else in the world but the road in front of them. If John had

driven fast before, this time she equaled him. The dial was fifty-five, and although the wheel bucked and jerked she managed to keep the car at it, speeding like a scared rabbit.

At last John said, "Ease her a little, we've dropped them," and they swung through the sleeping town of Lake Worth and off the Dixie Highway to the bridge and the road to the beach. Nothing she had ever seen in her life looked as good to her as that sight of the steady old ocean.

It was easy going from then, with the wind in their faces. It was growing lighter. Over beyond the broad streak of blue at the horizon that was defining itself as the Gulf Stream the great gulf clouds towered, growing whiter and more dazzling. She stopped for a while to fix John's bandage better.

"Let's watch it," he said.

The light broadened and the clouds turned infinitely red, a burning, amazing fire color. The sea stretched out a sheet of slow breathing silver clear to those clouds. And then between the clouds and the horizon a red disk suddenly cut like a knife, swelling, leaping, bounding, standing clear from the sea, striking at their eyes. The light was as suddenly snapped on over the world. It was clear morning.

"Oh, I say," he said suddenly. "I don't seem to like to rub it in or anything, but—er—you're about the nicest kind of an enemy I've had for a long time. Do you mind awfully my getting this case?"

Narcissa grinned back at him brazenly. "You see, I was going to stab you in the back, but I thought I'd better pick somebody my own size."

And then they both laughed. In fact, the ice in the eyes of the aristocratic Narcissa Spink-Sprague seemed permanently to have broken up.

VI

THE morning trade winds were at their brisk business when they swept

down the green-shaded and palm-bordered road to the hotel. They stopped modestly at the servants' entrance. And by a yawning and surprised porter they sent word for E. J. and breakfast.

They were eating it when he, scrubbed pink and tidy, came dashing down the steps.

"Why, my dear child—Brassington—what—what is this? Where've you been?"

And so right then, with her mouth full of buttered toast and coffee and John all dirty and bloody and looking sick and white—Narcissa told him the whole story, every last bit.

John Brassington laughed, too, when E. J. finally laughed, and there the three of them were, potential murderers and bootleggers, crowing and shouting until the tears ran down their cheeks.

"So here's your fifty cases, sir," John said finally. "You'll have to admit I did my best."

"I'll say you did," chuckled E. J. "Here, boy. You go get us a hammer and a chisel and some glasses and we'll celebrate right now."

John jumped out of the car and with his one good hand insisted upon opening it. So did E. J. and then shoved and fussed and laughed. Finally a board was jerked off and they stood looking into the box.

E. J. stared. Narcissa stared. John went white.

That case was full of canned salmon.

E. J. started to laugh, but the look on John Brassington's face stopped him. He stood gazing into that case as if the last ounce of strength had gone out of him. The silly red labels flared insolently in the sun.

Then, wearily, muscle by muscle, he picked himself up, reached for his handkerchief and began flicking dust off his crumpled shirt front. When he lifted his head his face was expressionless. He was again the Complete Diplomat.

"Mr. Sprague," he said, "I must beg your pardon for troubling you. Apparently I was quite mistaken in my ability."

And he nodded to E. J., without once glancing at Narcissa, turned on his heel and stalked off down the drive.

They stood staring like idiots. Then Narcissa looked at E. J. He was looking at her.

"E. J.," she said fiercely, "I want him!"

"So do I, my dear," he replied. "Go bring him back."

How she did it she wasn't quite sure. She called and he waited for her, scuffling pebbles with his toe.

"John," she said, "please—please come back. E. J. has a— a— favor to ask you."

He came, slowly.

E. J. was very brisk and cheery, fussing around, ordering the porter exactly how to pick up the breakfast things, whistling under his breath and lifting up the hood of the car to gaze earnestly into the engine.

"I'm thinking of taking a cruise," he said. "A long cruise. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find a captain I could trust. I just happened to wonder, Mr. Brassington, if you would mind considering taking

charge of the 'Sea Lark' in that capacity?"

John stood perfectly still, looking hard at the bald spot on the back of E. J.'s head.

"I have had a certain amount of experience as a navigating officer," he said slowly. "If you—"

Clang, went the hood as E. J. faced around, dusting his hands briskly.

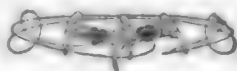
"Then you're captain," he said. "I think you and I had better go up and get busy right away." And before Narcissa had time to wink he was busily towing John along the walk and up the stairs to the side veranda, talking all the time. John's back looked slightly dizzy.

Narcissa sat down on the car step and wiped her eyes with her powder puff. A voice hailed her from above.

"Hey, below there," John called and she looked up to see him grinning down at her. "Don't let them throw away that case of gold fish. I want to keep it for a souvenir. What's the proper thing to serve it with, burgundy or Botticelli?"

"You—you idiot," said the patrician Miss Narcissa Spink-Sprague. "Go wash your face."

"Go wash your own," he retorted snappily and went off whistling.



The Voice of Urraca

By Linton Reynolds Massey

IN Seville, to this day even, there is in the mouths of the elder folk a tale of sufficient truth, telling how, long ago, Don Felipe Iñigo de Segovia, that disreputable rake whose cançons are still justly famous, grew weary of the world.

On that particular night (they say) a bottle of wine would have restored his old gaiety had not his weariness been a relief. Thus he abandoned himself to reflections which in another mood, at another time, he would have dismissed with a grin and a careless toss of his head.

For the necessity of maintaining a reputation for deviltry was a serious matter: well enough that he took life much as he found it, but light-heartedness was not alone expected—a poet ought to be light-headed as well and without consideration conform to his fellows' notions of a poet's conduct. So the frolics of Don Felipe had set many tongues wagging as a consequence, and there was predicted with impressive emphasis his eventual utter ruin.

There were remembered the struggles of his youth and the wretched poverty that was his; and there was recalled, too, without difficulty, his tolerably sudden elevation to fame and attendant good fortune through his patron and benefactor, Don Fernando de Castillo. Were not the ballads of Don Felipe on every tongue? Had not his plays found the boards in every province? Was not all Spain laughing at the mere mention of his last hero's erotic misdemean-

ors? Why, God be praised!—there was not his equal anywhere.

Still the gossips of those days shook their heads knowingly and, declaring there is no cure for folly, predicted his eventual utter ruin. . . .

These reports disturbed Don Felipe not at all. Nothing, apparently, ever disturbed Don Felipe. Boldly he held with the Roman that life is all too brief and its affairs temporal and of no appreciable ultimate importance. "*Dum vivimus, vivamus*," he quoted familiarly, and noted the inscription was found appropriately enough on the tombstone of Rome's most celebrated courtesan.

Yet, on that particular night as he strolled aimlessly along Calle Peñaflo, he was weary of the world. The houses with their low-corbelled balconies and high roofs rose abruptly on each side and were silhouetted against the delicate hazy blue of the summer night. The street itself was, at this hour, deserted and its loneliness accentuated by the soft languorous moonlight falling slantwise in the narrow, stone-flagged roadway that was in turn patched here and there by streams of yellow light through the stout iron grates of some half-open casement.

So quiet was the world in this spot that the presence of Don Felipe and the slight noise he made in walking desecrated what seemed almost holy ground.

Why, in such silent, sacerdotal surroundings he ought to be dressed in gown and cowl! Instinctively his

hand went to his hair, tied behind in the foppish manner of the times and nearly covered by his hat adorned with a plume of green feathers. He smoothed the lace displayed at the slashes of his velvet doublet and adjusted the fold of his cloak with a grace altogether peculiar.

"By the mass!" he complained half-aloud, "I am no three-forked padre, but an honest *cancionero*. Wine and a wench! Wine and a wench!—God pity me. . . ."

"*Palabras de boca, piedras de honda,*" observed a small feminine voice from the darkness. "Enter quietly: he will not return until sunrise."

Don Felipe stopped with a jerk and gazed about critically. As he did so, there was a fluttering of a figure which could be dimly discerned through the shutters of a window immediately toward his left. He at once understood the meaning of this movement so obviously designed to signal his attention, and, as if to show complaisance and willingness to undertake what promised to be a somewhat delightful adventure, he bowed with courtly grace, his plumed hat in hand sweeping the dust. Then, smiling faintly despite his lugubrious mood, and with a characteristic shrug which disparaged his weariness, Don Felipe quickly raised the latch and slipped into the house from whence had come the voice.

He was met by a woman, a servant of the place, who conducted him without a word to an ante-room on the floor above. Here she left him after indicating with a wave of her hand that he was invited to appraise the wines from Xerez and Malaga, and the drinks of mixed spices which crowded a low flat table of finely cut walnut.

Don Felipe first surveyed the room. Its interior was solely illuminated by a silver lamp beside an antique brazero on the mantel of the fireplace. This feeble light glowed

dully upon the rafters of the ceiling whose compartments were ornamented with elaborate arabesques and geometrical designs. The arched door through which he had entered was flanked by spiral-fluted pilasters, richly adorned. On the walls were smoky old pictures in frames delicately carved and brown in tone. There was, too, a faded tapestry of Italian workmanship; and on a nail hung a feathered hat. The floor was blackened and polished. Aside from the small table and a single high-backed chair, the room contained no furniture.

This pretentious atmosphere of quality was not a little astonishing, considering the nature of his summons, and Don Felipe wondered what sort of *hidalgo* calls himself owner and master here. Evidently the fellow was a poor guardian of his treasure, or else he placed unwarranted faith in the constancy of woman. Who could tell?—he might be a thin-shanked and rusty old man; perhaps he was a fiery-blooded blade who preferred to romp in foreign fields.

Don Felipe dismissed these reflections by inspecting with deliberation the array of wines before him. He drank gratefully, speculating upon the probable turn of affairs. Of course, impromptu meetings of this fashion were by no means uncommon: indeed, it sometimes seemed that whole regiments of neglected wives and misunderstood sweethearts were marshalled in readiness for close-lipped and appreciative young fellows, adept in parcelling sympathy. Well, he fulfilled these requirements admirably. . . .

After a time, the servant returned and led him along the arcaded gallery of the patio to a door which she opened without knocking. The door closed softly behind him.

Intuitively he was aware that here was the woman whose voice had so opportunely interrupted him in the

street. True enough, she was nowhere to be seen, for the room was quite dark saving only the slight reflection from the moonlight filtering through the lozenge-shaped, leaded panes; yet there was unaccountable otherwise, a faintly discernible perfume. So Don Felipe bowed and spoke to this woman familiarly.

"—and I throw myself at your feet, señorita," he concluded with another sweeping gesture.

"You do well," she approved with the demure little voice that Don Felipe recognized instantly, "and it is regrettable that prudence compels me to receive you thus, and I implore your pardon."

"Circumstances are singularly pleasing," he remarked politely, yet wondering whether prudence or ugliness dictated his reception in utter darkness.

"Providence fulfilled your prayer with unaccustomed promptness, you must allow, Sir Nobody," she continued, "and I trust my confidence in your taciturnity and discretion has not been misplaced. You will understand now, perhaps, that with all my faith in you, darkness is still preferable to a kindled lamp. Not that I really distrust you though, of course."

Don Felipe grinned, and made an appropriate reply. "My lady fascinates unseen, whereas less alluring women must display more observable wares. . . ."

She rebuked him simply. "No," she said, "that is not entirely true, although you were kind in expressing it so: yet I am no age-shriveled hag,"—her voice carried a twinge of impatience—"but comely enough as presently you may estimate for yourself. And now be seated in the chair yonder to your right, and tell me who you are."

"Ay, but my name is of no especial consequence to you, señorita," he began, "and it is enough to know that I am only a poor devil of a poet.

Perhaps there is no particular significance in that circumstance, either. For in truth my verses are only indifferent imitations of obscure originals and my ideals are dusty in their second-handness, despite the praise of both you may have heard hereabouts. Why, my creatures are not real persons who live and love and die: they are rough-cut wooden dolls who shed wooden tears. Still, in attaining thus much I have spent these years—a youth dedicated to counterfeiting. . . ."

"So it is that sometimes I wander aimlessly," he continued, "full of weariness, not clearly comprehending what I seek. But tonight I have found that not understandable something, and it is for you my heart is full of yearning. . . ."

The woman spoke eagerly. "Tell me how beautiful you imagine me to be!"

Don Felipe made no response.

"Your stillness is not, under the circumstances, very flattering, Don Fulano," she said after a moment.

"Ay, *querido mio*, but your voice brings back the voice of a child I loved odd years ago. And even now, loving you with all my heart as I do, I cannot quite forget that blue-eyed child.

"It grieves me to think how much I loved her. That love was my weakness, señorita, so I am ashamed of it, a little: why, because of it I despise myself, almost. Yet I shall always remember her as she was then; and though it has been a bare handful of years since we last saw each other, I know well she is already time-stained, so I pray God we never meet again."

There was silence an instant before he proceeded.

"For I cherished that illusion of my youth, and I shall always remember her as she was then. Why, it seemed when we were talking, you and I, that it was she yonder, a little roughened by time only. Thus my heart gave

unwonted quivers and my throat played me tricks. And once again I was in Castilla and it was Spring: that Spring when for months I missed not a day at vespers, merely in the hope—God forgive me—of glimpsing two turquoise eyes and a stray strand of dull golden hair. . . .

"Somehow from amongst those careless hours there came one when she no longer had eyes for me, nor anyone save Don Gaspar, who possessed a sufficient number of doblones and pistoles. Still, I could forgive that,—everything except the readiness with which she sought my successor. Is it not strange that Hell, too, is painted black?—for she married Don Gaspar. . . ."

The woman with Don Felipe laughed shrilly. "What a fool you are with this milling over old loves; already you are tipsy in your cups."

Her laugh tore the heart of Don Felipe as nails are ripped from the flesh, and he shuddered, yet, *Por Dios!*—the woman was right: this was no time for the wistful, battered dreams which had come and vanished in the mist of a long dead Springtime. The dead had buried their dead: and Urraca and his vain love for her were dead also. Yes, the boy and girl in that old time were in all ways so admirable, but now—! Why of a certainty Urraca had forgotten their childish love. Perhaps she had lost some of her fragile beauty and was heavy-eyed and fat about the hips. Anyway, this was not the time for old loves, so he feigned, however badly, his former gaiety.

"Ea, señorita, but you are not she. By my faith, Urraca was only an excessively pretty doll who repaid my love with forgetfulness, but I flatter myself you will be considerably more generous. Why this darkness cannot hide your charm! And in thinking of it, Urraca was not really beautiful,

nor ugly either, you understand; but surely not so lovely as you, señorita!"

The woman yawned audibly. "He! guapo, how you chatter!" said she. "You hold your wine but poorly. Sing for me a ballad of light love—" and she pushed toward him with her foot, a gilded Moorish lute.

Don Felipe moved unsteadily, wearily, saying, "You command, I obey. . . ." Without enthusiasm he began the redondilla called, "Tuya Es La Gloria."

'Amada, de los ojos tornasoles, amada:

*Cuyos dolientes sienos piden el nuevo tul:
Tu has perdido en venas un llama sagrada,
Y has dejado en mis ojos un vision azul—'*

He broke off singing and his voice trailed thinly. "No," he said wretchedly, "I cannot sing that song . . ." and he reached out in the darkness toward her. . . .

When the grey streaks of dawn appeared, the woman roused and called her dueña who handled matters so expeditiously that Don Felipe shortly thereafter found himself in an otherwise deserted street. With a listless shrug and a strange, twisted smile, he passed on. And he was weary of the world.

Elsewhere, there was a woman sobbing heartbrokenly. There was present, too, a slightly older woman who attempted vainly to quiet her.

"I am vile, Doña Ines," the one cries. "How he loved me! Oh, God in Heaven forgive my folly! I was beautiful and he loved me! And those foolish songs of his, Doña Ines, they sing of me: it is of me that all Spain is breathing! Yet last night, he never suspected. . . . Ah, Blessed Virgin, he must never know. Promise, Ines!—promise me he will never know—promise! . . ." and she wept heartbrokenly. . . .

In Seville, to this day even, they tell the story thus.



The Apothecary

A Fragment

By Fairfax Downey

ROMEO: Hold, there is forty ducats; let me have a dram of poison.

Apothecary: 'S against the law. Need some tooth powder? Tonic for the hair? Some soap?

Romeo: Have done! A dram of poison.

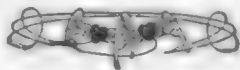
Apothecary: Don't keep it. But a sale of thermos bottles now is in progress. Or alarm clocks.

Romeo: A plague on all you druggists! Poison!

Apothecary: Any mothballs? Kodak films? Candy? Some safety razor blades? . . . No poison.

Romeo: But here's a learned medico's prescription for several drams of liquor.

Apothecary: Why didst not say so in the first place? Name the poison!
(Curtain.)



It Is a Strange Thing

By Harold Lewis Cook

IF I had walked in Grecian lands
Ten centuries and more ago,
I should have knelt and raised my hands
And worshipped you ere you should go

Swift as sunlight through a glass,
Swift as a star back to those mountains
Where gods must wonder while you pass
Marvelous, among the fountains.

It is a strange thing to discover
That when I sing now of desire,
You come to me as comes a lover,
You the tinder, I the fire.



The Idle Singer

By Dick Ham

TIME was when newspaper men were frequently drunk on duty and it did not matter as long as they could deliver the goods. I remember one fellow—the best police reporter in the world, I firmly believe, and a most marvelous news writer—back in my cub days on the New York "Star." Corbin his name was, De Lancy Corbin, but everybody called him Lance. Well, Lance never handled a story in all the years I was on the "Star" that he was not drunk as a lord. Indeed, it would have been impossible for him to do anything sober, since he was never sober. His sobriety was merely a stage on the road to intoxication, a lesser degree of drunkenness.

I can see him bending over his desk, lying on it rather, head supported on his left arm, while with a two-inch stub of pencil he ripped out his stuff. They let him write longhand. He hated typewriters and he could produce singularly clear copy with his mutilated pencil. He was fast too. I often wonder what became of Lance Corbin.

But all that was twenty years or more ago. Times have changed in newspaper offices as everywhere else. For the better, I suppose, though sometimes I wonder. Our young men still drink and play about a bit, but not while on the job. The old man won't stand for it. We have an efficient staff and we do things in a businesslike way. Sometimes I think it is too damned businesslike. The stuff we put out has no more snap to it than a piece of clothesline. Scoops don't happen any more, except of the most denatured kind. There is no more

yellow journalism: it is all pink. We have pink newspapers these days.

If I get on this strain, I shall never write the yarn I have in mind.

Even in the old times, it was not considered proper to apply for a job while drunk. It happened sometimes, but only when a man's reputation was sufficient to carry the load. Even then it was risky. Imagine my surprise not long ago, while I was holding down the city desk for the "Evening Bulletin," in a small Southern city, to have a drunken man apply for a job.

The reasonable thing for me to do, of course, was to send the fellow about his business, but I am not a reasonable man. I am an oldtimer for one thing, and for another I am always interested in everybody and everything out of the ordinary. Besides, this drunk landed at my desk after the wire had closed. There was nothing much for me to do, and I had been thinking regretfully of other days. Some of the copy these so-called journalists turn in gives me indigestion. Hell! I don't like journalists. I wish I could find a real reporter again.

Well, this drunk was different in more than one respect. He was gracefully drunk, if you understand me. That sort of intoxication is rare in these halcyon days of monkey rum. He did not stagger, and when he spoke, his words were clear enough. It would have taken experience to discover that he was drunk at all. I have the experience. I could tell by his eyes, for the pupils were thrice as large as they should be, and they glittered. I could tell by the elaborate ease of his movements, a smooth-

ness born of desire to conceal nervousness. I could tell by a number of other things. Moreover, he told me himself.

The man was somewhere in his early forties, I judged. He was as neatly dressed as a dandy could wish and his clothes were of highest quality in material and tailoring. He carried a malacca stick with its big hook over his left arm. His face was whimsical in the extreme with a queer little half smile at one corner of his mouth. He was smooth shaven and had dark hair, showing streaks of gray beneath his black, soft hat. Very tall and slender, a little stooped, he gave an impression of wiry strength and a constitution not much affected by dissipation.

Pausing in the doorway an instant, he took in the city room at a glance. Then he marched straight to my desk.

"City editor?" he inquired.

"Yes, Martin's my name, Jim Martin," I answered. "Have a chair." He took the seat I indicated, produced a case, extracted a card and handed it to me. It was engraved simply "Michael Larrimore."

"Well, Mr. Larrimore," I asked, "what can I do for you?"

"I am drunk," he observed.

"So I see."

"I want a job."

"The Chief doesn't hire drunks."

Larrimore laughed and shrugged his shoulders. "No, I suppose not. Nobody does any more. It's too bad."

"What can you do?"

"Most anything around the shop, if I have to. I prefer feature stuff, but I'll take anything you can offer."

"How soon can you sober up?" I demanded.

"I am never sober," he said.

This, of course, was my cue to inform Larrimore that the "Bulletin" had no place for habitual drinkers, that there was no vacancy anyhow. But I did not take the cue; something prevented. I guess that something was a hunch that here was a real newspaper man to break the monotony of my days. On the other hand, I knew the Chief would go way up in the air when he discovered Larri-

more's weakness. It didn't matter much, I thought, since I had small liking for my job and no real need of it. I tossed a mental coin, but will not swear I played straight. It fell in Larrimore's favor.

"All right, Larrimore. I'll take you on, but watch your step. I need an extra assignment man—don't like the way some of our stuff is handled—hope you can do better. Report tomorrow."

"Thank you, Mr. Martin. I'll try to suit you," said my new reporter and rising, bowed slightly before leaving the office.

I was pleased as the proverbial child with a fresh toy. That night I was in such high spirits my wife wanted to know whether I had bought the paper or been fired. I tried to explain and was called a fool for my pains, an estimate which proved true in a way, but not altogether. I was not wrong about Larrimore. He was a reporter, worth having, but he was also a curious combination of other things. He was a drunkard, a musician, a poet and a gentleman.

Several weeks after Larrimore joined the staff, during which time he had given the best satisfaction and become favorably if not familiarly known to the other men, he asked to be relieved of all assignments for a few days. "I think I have a story for you," he said, "but I can't be sure. Give me a free hand to investigate and some money for expenses."

"What is the story?" I demanded.

"This Kinkaid case. Did you notice anything peculiar about it?"

He referred to a commonplace sort of homicide that had not presented any unusual angle to me and had been covered by our regular police reporter. Kinkaid and three other men had been involved in a quarrel and street fight one night. Kincaid had struck a man named Hall, with his fist, according to witnesses, knocking Hall down. Either from the force of the blow or the impact of his skull against the pavement, Hall had been instantly killed. Kincaid and the other two men told the same story. All

had been drinking, they said, and a dispute arose. Hall was known to carry a knife, and when he reached toward his pocket, Kincaid struck without intent to kill. A bystander corroborated this story. None of the men involved was of standing in the city, but all were respectable enough so far as the police could discover. Kincaid got off with a light sentence for involuntary manslaughter.

"No," said I slowly, "I didn't see anything odd unless it was the refusal of all the men to tell the cause of the quarrel. Still, there were rumors that a woman was involved, in which case I think it was rather decent of the fellows not to talk."

"Precisely," Larrimore answered. "There was a woman involved, but it was not so much decency as fear that kept the men's mouths closed."

"What do you mean?"

"That is what I want to find out. I know who the woman was, however." He bent over my desk and spoke a name under his breath.

"Good God, man!" I stared at Larrimore as though he or I were crazy, as indeed I thought must be the situation. The name he gave me was that of the Mayor's wife, leader of local society, head of the associated charities, a beautiful woman and a good one, if I could judge by outward indications.

"No, I am no more drunk than usual," said Larrimore, "and I don't mean to imply that there is anything discreditable about her connection with the case. I don't think there is. In fact, I believe you will hear from her in a couple of days. But I want to look into this affair, as I have no positive information except that she was the woman Kincaid and Hall fought about."

"Go to it, son," I said. "Take your own time and anything reasonable by way of expense. But understand, I am relying entirely upon you to keep us out of a mess. Frankly, I think you have been imagining things, and if I had less faith in your hunches, I'd tell you to lay off the hooch."

Larrimore smiled. "Thanks. One

other thing. Did Carson see the body?"

"Yes, he told me he saw it right after the fight."

"How did he describe the effect of the blow?"

"Same as the story he wrote. Hall had a cut just under the left eye and another at the back of the skull, where his head hit the pavement, I suppose."

Larrimore studied this. "I noticed the coroner said the brain was so suffused with blood he could not determine whether the blow or the fall caused hemorrhage. Martin," he demanded suddenly, "did you ever know a blow from the naked fist, a blow with sufficient force to knock a man down, to leave a cut *close under the eye* and not mark the brow or cheek?"

It was my turn to study. I never had experience of such a blow, and after a moment's reflection was obliged to concede such effect unlikely. I told Larrimore so.

"Well," he went on, "it can't be done. The trial showed that Kincaid was a big man, weighing about one hundred ninety, forty pounds more than his victim. He is a mechanic and his fist is proportionate to his frame. The eye is protected by frontal bone and cheekbone. A blow cuts the flesh at those two points. It sometimes damages the eye, especially if "knucks" are used, but it *always* marks brow or cheek or both. A pigmy, if he could have reached Hall's eye with his fist, might have left the mark described: Kincaid never could. Moreover," and here Larrimore leaned toward me, "I went to the jail this morning and talked to Kincaid. There is not a mark, not even a loose piece of skin, on the knuckles of either hand!"

This statement came home to me with greater force than the conjecture about a blow to the eye. Certainly, if Kincaid struck Hall with his fist hard enough to kill, or at least to knock him down, Kincaid would have skinned his knuckles. Probably he would have broken one or more of them. I wanted Larrimore to go on.

"I'm getting old, son," I said. "Car-

son let that get by, and I never noticed it. What's the answer?"

"That I don't know, but I mean to find out. Of course, there was a stone on the sidewalk near the body, but it is bigger than a man's fist and would have made jagged cuts—smashed a man's head. Besides, there is no blood on it. I have it." He grinned, "The police evidently overlooked it. It is my personal opinion that *Kincaid did not kill Hall!*"

"Who did?"

"I don't know. If I knew, I'd tell you. As it is, I must be on my way"—and Larrimore left me.

It was a week before I saw my star reporter again, but I thought of his prediction when, three days following our talk, the Mayor's wife telephoned and asked for me. She wanted me to call at her house that evening, saying she had a confidential matter to discuss. Of course, I went.

Knowing Mrs. Johnson by sight, I was amazed at her appearance. Despite evidence of liberal applications of cosmetics, she looked as though she had not slept for many hours. Her manner, however, was both cordial and controlled as she received me in the library of her home. She made me comfortable with one of her husband's cigars and then came straight to the point.

"Mr. Martin, you have a new reporter—a Mr. Larrimore?" It was scarcely an interrogation. I nodded assent.

"Do you know anything about him?"

"No, except that he is a gentleman and the best reporter I have seen in years."

"He—er—drinks, does he not?" The question, like her first, was more in the nature of an assertion, but this time I did not feel free to confirm her opinion.

"Perhaps, Mrs. Johnson, but I pay no attention to the personal habits of my staff so long as they do not interfere with the work or hurt the reputation of the newspaper."

The Mayor's wife was silent for a little. She seemed in a revery not altogether pleasant.

"Oh, well," she said finally, "probably I was mistaken, but he resembles a man I knew years ago. It doesn't matter, except that if he were the same man, I was going to ask that you dismiss him."

I was startled. "Supposing he were the man you had in mind, would not your request be unusual?"

"Yes, most unusual, since I could give you no definite reason for asking. I should certainly want you to do everything in your power to have this man placed in another position. He has done nothing to offend."

This did little to enlighten me, but it served further to arouse my curiosity and also to put me on my guard. What possible connection could Mrs. Johnson have with Michael Larrimore, especially in view of the fact that Larrimore had linked her name with the Kincaid case? Ought I to take a shot in the dark by referring to the death of Hall? No, I concluded. Larrimore had stated his belief that the Mayor's wife would communicate with me, and had not cautioned me about such an interview. But the case was in Larrimore's hands, and he should have a fair show. Moreover, it was not improbable that he was completely ignorant of Mrs. Johnson's interest in himself. I would try something else.

"Madam," said I, formally, "can you not tell me just what is on your mind? So far as I am aware, Mr. Larrimore is a stranger in the city. He came to me for work, saying that he was a good newspaper man. I have found him to be as he represented; in fact, he is the best man I have. He is plainly a gentleman, and though I am not well acquainted with him personally, I must say that I like him—am attracted to him in a powerful way. On the other hand, your husband is interested financially in the 'Bulletin,' and I am naturally disposed to favor his interests, especially when presented by his wife. If it were any man but Larrimore—" I broke off abruptly. It was a long speech for me. Then I shot a question at her suddenly.

"Mrs. Johnson, are you telling me that

it is best for your interest, for your husband's interest, to discharge Mr. Larrimore?"

For a few seconds the Mayor's wife stared at the floor. Her hands were clasped in her lap so tightly as to show white at the knuckles. Her face was pitifully white beneath its rouge.

Slowly she raised her eyes to meet mine.

"Mr. Martin, I must give you a confidence," she said. There was another pause, but at last she leaned toward me and spoke again.

"I knew Michael Larrimore in California years ago; before I met Mr. Johnson. He was a gifted newspaper writer—but his name was not Larrimore. We were—friendly, but his temperament was difficult to understand. He drank heavily at times, not enough to disturb his health apparently. I could never understand why he drank at all. . . ."

I sat perfectly still, wondering what was coming next. The beautiful woman continued:

"He was strange in other ways. Most of the time he seemed content to hold his newspaper position, but sometimes he would have spells of artistic energy when he was apparently beside himself. He would write for hours—usually poetry—and then he would lose all interest in his creations, frequently destroying the manuscript. Periods of despondency, almost melancholia, would follow, and if I roused him from his abstraction it was only to listen to words which held little meaning for me. He seemed to mock himself, to question the value of effort.

"In the end, he would drink harder than ever. Always he was kind to me, or tried to be. I knew he was convinced that I could not follow his thought. He was right in this, but he never knew how it hurt me!"

The Mayor's wife seemed to forget herself, and her eyes shone as she exclaimed, "Oh, he was a remarkable man, Mr. Martin! I have never seen anyone like him. Wonderful, but utterly incomprehensible. He seemed driven by devils, or torn between devils and angels. He loved music, too, was a natural mu-

sician, but would not study—said it was not worth while. I played to him at times, but I think he disliked my playing. . . .

"We quarreled, or rather, I quarreled. He would never grow angry with me. On those occasions he would become sad and look beyond me or through me. He would apologize for his peculiarities, often repeating that he believed himself a little mad.

"Finally I accepted his own estimate, that he was partially insane. I—I broke our friendship." Again Mrs. Johnson paused. She seemed deeply affected by the story she was telling.

"I came East. That was over ten years ago. I went to work in this city, and later was a Red Cross canteen worker. I met Mr. Johnson in the army. After the war we married, and I have been happy here helping him, busy with various matters, as you know.

"A few days ago, I met the man you know as Larrimore on the street. I started to speak, but did not. He did not recognize me, or pretended not to. But I was sure! I could not be mistaken. Quietly I made inquiries and identified him."

She leaned forward intensely.

"Mr. Martin, I am afraid! It is best for me, best for my husband, best for *him*, that this man go away from this city."

Impulse inclined me to end the matter without further investigation by granting Mrs. Johnson's wish, but the image of Larrimore arose before my eyes, commanding loyalty. I had not realized until then what a grip this strange man had upon my imagination and—yes, my affection.

"Do you fear harm from Larrimore, Mrs. Johnson, assuming you are not mistaken about his identity?" I asked.

"No. That is, not directly. I am sure he would not injure me. But his presence arouses old associations, old memories. I—I wish he would go away!" The last words were barely audible. The Mayor's wife was crying. I arose to go, my decision made.

"Mrs. Johnson," I said, taking her

hand, "Larrimore is working on a special assignment now, and I don't wish to disturb him. When that is over, you will hear from me again. Meanwhile, I beg you not to be distressed. I don't doubt your conviction that Larrimore is the man you knew, but neither do I doubt my conviction that he is honorable, and that he is here for a necessary purpose which surely is not to annoy you. Won't you trust to my judgment for the present?"

She had stopped crying and met my handclasp firmly. "Yes, I think you are right," she declared. "Michael was always honorable. But let me know something more as soon as you can. —And thank you for coming, Mr. Martin."

Larrimore's prediction was being fulfilled with a vengeance, I thought, as I walked back to the office. Assuredly the Kincaid case was showing complications out of the ordinary, complications involving not only the Mayor's wife, but Michael Larrimore himself!

For the next few days I had little time to ponder over my star reporter's affairs, which was probably a good thing. Our city was a seaport, and events on the waterfront suddenly emerged from the stagnation which followed the war boom. Shipping became fairly active, due partially to the European coal shortage resulting from the French invasion of the Ruhr and partially to the longshoremen's strike in northern ports which forced numerous vessels to bunker in the South. Along with renewed activity in shipping came rumors of a rum running fleet in Southern waters. Color to these reports was lent by the appearance of good, Scotch whiskey, some quantities of which were taken in local police raids. I was pleased with the whiskey but highly curious regarding its source.

Time and again I cursed the luck that kept my best staff man away when I could use him to advantage. Several stories which I knew to be good leads slipped through the fingers of my regular waterfront man. I stormed and fumed and swore, but it did no good. Quayle was a routine man—they were *all* rou-

tine men—and I could not leave the desk. Then, late one afternoon, Larrimore telephoned, asking me to come to his rooms.

From the manner of his applying for a job, I gained the impression that Larrimore was short of funds, yet it was in keeping with the character of the man that he lived almost luxuriously. The address he gave me was in a rather sordid neighborhood, and the house was of dingy externals, but Larrimore's apartment was all a fastidious man could desire. It was simply furnished, but the rugs were of the best, the furniture and few pictures harmonious. A grand piano stood in the large, front room. And we were paying this man fifty dollars a week!

Such impressions come later. Singularly enough, I never thought of the incongruity until afterward, nor was I at all surprised that Larrimore received me in evening clothes. His expression took my whole attention as he drew me inside and led me to a table upon which stood a bottle of the same Scotch I had been enjoying.

"First take a drink of that," commanded Larrimore, "it has definite bearing on the story I have to tell."

I did not need urging. In fact, I sampled the whiskey twice before I sat down and, lighting my pipe, waited for the reporter to talk. He took two or three turns up and down the room, then, still standing, began to speak in quick, nervous sentences.

"Martin, I told you there was a story in the Kincaid case. There is, but I am sure you will not use it. That whiskey is from the British freighter 'Lands-end.' She cleared yesterday. The whiskey was unloaded here. Most of it has been distributed. Kincaid was in charge of the retailing. Hall and the other two fellows worked for him. Hall got drunk and talked too much. He knew, in some way, who financed the deal, and it made him dissatisfied with his pay. Blackmail looked attractive, so he tried it. He threatened to tell the Boss's wife, but the Boss denied any knowledge of the whiskey business and

bluffed that he would have Hall arrested. Hall decided to carry out his threat, and took preliminary steps to do so. Kinkaid knew it. That is what the quarrel was about."

My mind was running too fast. "Great Scot, man! Who is the Boss? Is it—"

Larrimore checked me with upraised hand. "Yes, the man whose name you were about to speak. He has been in the business for some time."

"And his wife—?"

"Knows nothing about it, though she would have known soon, if Hall had lived. It would have been disgrace for her—unbearable disgrace!"

"Have you proofs that the Boss was connected with this shipment?"

"Plenty, but I do not intend to use them. That is where you come in. I want you to face this man with the proofs and get him to promise to quit the rum business and a lot of other business he has been conducting under cover of his position. It ought not to be hard for you. He has been badly scared. Tell him he is watched by the federal authorities."

"How do you know so much?" I demanded.

Larrimore paused.

"I have made it my business to," he replied briefly.

"But why do you protect him?" I persisted. "His wife sent for me, just as you predicted—and asked me to fire you."

Larrimore sat down abruptly at the piano. I think he wished to conceal his face from me. He began to play without answering my question, and the music was very beautiful. I have no idea what it was. Then, when I least expected, and without stopping the low chords, he asked: "Did she give any reason?"

"Yes. She said she had known you years ago, that your name was not Larrimore, that your presence here disturbed her peace of mind. She asked me to help you locate elsewhere." Moved by sudden impulse, I went to the piano and laid my hands on the man's shoulders.

"Michael," I said, "won't you be frank? She said more, or rather she showed more emotion than her words implied. Said you were wonderful, but that she could never understand you and that you were always honorable. She cried when she talked about you. Who are you, Michael Larrimore?"

His hands were quiet on the keys but he did not turn around. "At present I am merely a newspaper man, working for you," he said, "but I shall not be long."

"Yes, lad, but your name?"

"You will find a name on that book over there by the desk lamp."

I picked up the volume he indicated and gasped. "Donald Bryce, the poet!" I cried.

Larrimore nodded. "Yes, I was Donald Bryce," he said.

"But who are you *really*, lad? I am more fond of you than I like to tell. It doesn't sound well from an old hard-shell like me."

At that, Larrimore arose and faced me. His face was white, but he laughed and led me to the whiskey again. "Just an idle singer," he said. "Let's have another drink. I have one other thing to tell." We had the drink and returned to our chairs.

"Martin, I told you Kinkaid did not kill Hall. That was true. I told you I did not know who killed him. That was a lie. Kinkaid *thinks* he killed Hall, but the blow was nothing. It was not hard enough to knock Hall down, but Hall was drunk and must have stumbled. You must get Kinkaid out of jail, poor devil!"

"How do you know? Who *did* kill Hall?"

"Among other things, I am a murderer. I killed Hall."

"Larrimore, you are crazy!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps," he said, with a weary smile. "I often think so, and others have thought so. Nevertheless, it is true that I killed Hall. I killed him in cold blood after Kinkaid and the other fellows ran away. I struck too hard and made that cut under the eye. Your

fool coroner should have looked further than the surface of the brain. Deep in the under portion he would have found a sliver of glass no bigger than a needle. It is the blade of a Japanese glass dagger, one of those cunning murder tools that break off in the body, leaving no puncture that can be seen without closest examination. However, I was in a hurry, and the hilt struck Hall's eye. The blade entered just below—a Jap trick. You can verify all this when the body is exhumed."

I had seen glass daggers in museums, marvelous little instruments, usually disguised as some harmless object. The round glass blade is straight and very slender, tapering to a pin point and filed almost through near the middle. Such a dagger must be plunged straight in, and then a slight twist leaves the blade in the body. It is fatal at almost any spot, as the blood carries the glass to the heart. In fact, heart failure is the frequent post-mortem verdict.

But somehow I could not believe Larrimore's confession, or would not. I just sat and stared at him.

He spoke again. "Have me arrested. I'll make a confession under the name I am using here, and I'll have a satisfactory motive to give for the murder. I am tired anyhow, and I am not remorseful about Hall. It *had* to be done."

"Why, lad?"

He looked at me with a haggard face.

"Well, you see, among other roles, I have the honor of being Mrs. Johnson's husband," he said.

* * *

AND that is all. As my wife said, I was a fool about Michael Larrimore. I never reported the confession to the authorities, but I succeeded in clearing Hall by manipulating the story Michael gave me concerning the possibilities of a blow to the eye. I caused another autopsy to be held, and sure enough,

there was a splinter of glass in the brain. —Yet I have never fully believed Michael struck the blow.

Neither did I ever tell Mrs. Johnson, though I scared the rum running Mayor within an inch of his life. He will behave in future, I think. To Mrs. Johnson I explained that I had sent Larrimore away. She did not ask for his address. As a matter of fact, I did not know it. I talked to him just once more before he left the city. He refused any further information.

"Martin, you know more about me than any living soul," he said. "I am sorry I dragged you into this, but the newspaper job was necessary to my work. I had never lost sight of my—of Mrs. Johnson, you see. I knew Johnson's implication in the smuggling business, and I knew his capture and her humiliation were near. I am grateful to you, but it would do no good to talk. Since you won't arrest me, I suppose I'll go away. It is better that you should not know who I am. I am a newspaper man, a poet, a murderer and an idle singer. It is enough. Just an idle singer, Martin. Goodbye!"

An idle singer? The phrase haunted me. I never heard of Michael Larrimore again, but from William Morris I refreshed my memory and deepened my understanding.

"Of heaven or hell I have no power to sing.
I cannot ease the burden of your fears
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts, still unsatisfied, ye sigh,
And feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every moment as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days
die—

—Remember me a little then I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day."



"Jist a Little Onion"

By Art Smith

ABOVE the dark green of elm trees, and over the blue haze of the road's end, the quiet twilight gathered. Somewhere a rook grackled irksomely at the last fluttering pollen of the faded sun. Not a homing bee but had found his hive, not a hollyhock but had closed its lashes in crimson sleep, not a pig but had found his place in the mire. . . .

In the dim lantern light of the long shadowed cow-shed old wart-lipped Farmer Clabber sat, titilating the udder of a cow. He rested his leathern head in the round hole which many years of resting had indented in the side of the beast. In monotonous punctuation of the steady plunk of milk, the cow's tail swished a bored swish. Thus went the rural rhythm of evening. Clabber and the cow had worked hard that day. . . .

"Clabber!" said a warm, liquid voice.

Farmer Clabber looked up. It was the cow!

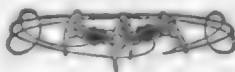
"Goin' crazy," thought he. "Damf ain't!"

"I don't mind your going to sleep against me," the cow continued, very

delicately shifting her cud, and regarding the farmer from a somewhat hurt distance, "but I do object to your continued endeavor to induce milk to flow from my udder, which is long since empty. Aside from the annoyance you cause me, does it not occur to you that the height of imbecility is to work in your sleep? Are you not satiated after working every minute from dawn till twilight? If you must labor into the night, kindly seek an employment more productive to yourself and less harassing to me. For I assure you that *I* believe night was given us for pleasure and rest, and *I* intend to sleep when it is possible. Furthermore, Farmer Clabber, let me tell you in plain language that you are a *damn fool*, and my advice to you is to go out and look at the moon."

Now Farmer Clabber was so dumfounded he could not say what he felt he should have said. So he simply got up and slumped out into the barnyard. He looked at the moon.

"Hm!" he grunted. "Looks like a onion . . . jist a little onion. . . . That reminds me: I got to weed them onions."



MATRIMONY is often an almshouse for those who have squandered all their love.



Matters of Fact

By Sterling Beeson

MR. HARKNESS looked at his wife across the breakfast table. He had it in mind to make some meaningless remark about the weather or the eggs, and he commenced to speak. What he heard almost gave him a fit of apoplexy. For he had said,

"It's too bad you didn't stay in the kitchen. I've hated the sight of you for so long that now I can't even eat when you're looking at me."

It was as though some nervous spasm had seized his vocal machinery and fashioned the words in spite of his will to suppress them. For the first time in his recollection he had said actually what he thought. He shivered as he raised his eyes to the fat placid face across the table. His wife was large. The brown-grey hair about her face gave her an aspect of austerity. Somehow it seemed to him that she had always looked that way. Tyrannical—that was it.

While he was still meshed in the fearful speculation that tumbled through his mind, he heard her speaking. His wife was saying:

"I know it. And you're not the only one to feel that way about it. I've often wondered what fun destiny gets out of contemplating such a spectacle as you and I. You think I'm a fat old woman without a thought outside this infernal little rat's nest we call home. Well, the fact that I'm a fat old woman keeps me here all right, but I still have young ideas. Hurry up and get out of here."

His wife handed him a cup of coffee. He couldn't trust himself to speak again, but at the door he turned.

"I'm going to play poker tonight," he said, "and I don't know what else. I'll be home when I get home." He staggered against the door jamb. What he had intended to say was that he would be detained late by out-of-town clients.

"I'll bawl you out as usual when you get here, and whine a lot, but it doesn't mean anything," she replied.

Harkness rushed out of the house. He wanted to get somewhere to think it over. It seemed incredible that he had said and heard the things that his ears had reported to his brain. He got into his car.

All the way downtown he kept turning over in his mind the unbelievable thing that had happened. He had about convinced himself that he had just imagined it all; that long unspoken thoughts had become so vivid they registered on his mind as words. The things that convinced him that he was having a hallucination was the utterly absurd things he had seemed to hear his wife say. No, nothing unusual had happened. She could not by any stretch of imagination be credited with having said such things, and it was even less possible that she could have heard him say such things without a more dreadful seance than any he had visioned in the uxorial nightmares that so frequently troubled his guilty sleep. So he sped onward toward his office. As he

passed a traffic officer whom he particularly disliked, he leaned out of his car and said,

"You big stiff, I'm going to get you a tin top to spin out here on this corner. It would mean as much as the senseless way you handle traffic."

The officer stopped him, and coming over to the car thrust out his jaw and said,

"I can't take you down for that kind of talk—it ain't legal, but believe me, I'll hand you something yet. Go on with your old boiler."

This incident threw Harkness into another fit of uncertainty and speculation. He would, ordinarily, as readily have walked into the lion's cage at the zoo and pulled the whiskers out of the big lioness lying there among her cubs, as to have said what he thought he said to the policeman. Still mystified, he parked his car and went up to the offices where for many years Harkness, Ballou and Higbee had been counsellors-at-law.

One of the stenographers came into his room with a handful of letters. She was a particularly winsome girl. She was very seductively dressed. Harkness looked at her.

"My dear," he said, "you are the cutest thing these old eyes have seen in some fifty years of star-gazing. Let's drive out to Clover Mead Inn this afternoon and dance a little. I've got two quarts of real whiskey under the rear seat cushion."

The girl looked at him a moment, and shifting her gum, replied,

"Say, your heart hasn't pumped anything but pasteurized milk since before I was born. How do you get that way. Old dumb-bells like you ought to have a guardian." And she slammed down the letters and slammed the door as she went out.

This incident upset Harkness again. He went over to a window and opened it, inhaling deep drafts of the cool air. He looked down at the busy streets. Was he crazy? Had some insidious insanity crept up and entrenched itself in his brain

while he slept? All morning he had been saying exactly what he thought, and getting equally disconcerting replies from those to whom he had spoken. He sat stupefied at his desk.

Suddenly he remembered that he was to appear before the judges of the appellate court at nine o'clock to argue a motion for a new trial in a case in which a jury had given a brakeman \$25,000 for his legs, cut off by a freight train owned and operated by Harkness' clients.

Picking up the papers in the case, he hurried out. As he passed through the corridor, he heard the sound of weeping. He saw the sobbing form of one of his office girls in a chair. Another bent over her, with one arm around her, comforting her.

"What's the matter?" asked Harkness.

The girl who was crying, raised her tear-stained face: "She said the meanest things to me, Mr. Harkness," she said.

"But I'm sorry now," said the other girl. "I was envious of her good looks and her nice dresses. I was selfish and sore, and I'm so sorry. I don't think that way about it any more. I don't know what made me say such things to her, for she likes me—she told me so."

Harkness went on out and walked to the court house without trusting himself to speak to anyone. As he passed through the streets he noticed that people hurried along, most of them with worried, troubled faces.

In the court room the serenity peculiar to the place was undisturbed. Here at least was the solidity of reason. Here at least was Harkness safe from the perturbing experiences of the morning. The court was almost empty. Only the bailiff, the counsel for the plaintiff, and a few other attorneys appearing in other cases were in the great quiet room.

Harkness was sure of himself now. He had only to recite a few technical reasons why there should be another trial in a case so conspicuously full

of error that any school boy could see that the verdict and judgment of the lower court was a miscarriage of justice.

The three appellate judges filed solemnly into the room from their private office. They seated themselves upon the great chairs behind the high counter at which they dispensed decisions. Harkness heard his case called. He rose and said,

"Your honors, I had it in mind this morning to give you a lot of fool reasons why we should have another trial of the case in which a just and compassionate jury gave this poor plaintiff a little bit of money for a horrible injury sustained in trying to operate a lot of junk which my clients insist upon calling rolling stock.

"Now, this first trial was fair enough. The case was heard upon its merits. The only excuses I have to offer in asking for a new trial are a lot of utterly ridiculous technicalities that do not even involve the vaguest principle of justice. This case is such a dead open and shut liability for my clients that sooner or later they will certainly have to pay the money if the plaintiff has the resources and the determination to go on through all the courts and all the processes and all the delays to which we can easily subject his claim. We are here this morning only in an effort to so prolong this action and pile up expense, and delay it that this man will run out of money, or die, or give up in despair. We know that it costs us something to do this, but really it's much less expensive and much more satisfactory for us. These are the facts, your honors," and Harkness sat down.

His head was swimming. He had done the incredible thing again. But the counsel for the plaintiff was speaking. He was a portly elderly man and his words sounded strangely, coming from a person who seemed to reflect so much august benevolence.

"Your honors, we are going to fight against this motion with every re-

source at our command because if we can get this judgment confirmed we will get about twenty thousand of the twenty-five thousand awarded to the plaintiff. I personally pray for a speedy rejection of this motion. I have a lot of debts. I've been living expensively in a fashion that is little suspected by my family and my associates. I must have money quickly or these things will become known and I will be in a ridiculous position. Frankly, some of my foolishness makes me shiver as I think about it. Your honors, for heaven's sake, help get me out of my troubles. Five thousand dollars will be a fortune to this brakeman and twenty thousand will be a great help to me."

And now the senior judge of the court was speaking. His deep sonorous voice reverberated through the room.

"We have only a hazy idea of what you fellows are talking about. As a matter of course, we will reserve decision. I usually say until we can examine the transcript of the former trial, but we seldom bother about that.

"We judges are in a hurry to get away this morning. I want to go out to my farm and look at some cattle I bought the other day. Judge Hicks here has a golf game, I believe, and Judge Higgenbotham wants to get out of town on personal business. Just go on away and forget about all this. Thank heaven there are always a few crazy enthusiasts in the profession and on the bench to deal out what you fellows call justice, and like the job. If you bother us too much, we will get the case out of this court, and somewhere else you both may get what you want. The court will take the motion under advisement."

Harkness was back in the street again. He walked feebly to a little park adjacent to the court. He sat down upon a bench and tried to think. He listened as one half asleep to the roar of the city about him. When he looked up at those who were hurry-

ing past, he noticed that their faces wore a frightened look, and that their lips were tightly compressed. Did they, too, have the same dreadful urge to say what they thought?

The cry of a newsboy roused him from his gloomy meditations. He bought a paper. Across the top of the extra he read in black headlines:

Mysterious Phenomenon Rocks Social Structure

He read hurriedly. Everywhere people were speaking their thoughts. The front page was a hodge podge of crazy statements.

None less than the president of the great republic had said that the people were a lot of dull-witted brutes, and that patriotism was the essence of fraud distilled in the cellars of the capitol building by a group of mendacious grafters.

A prominent divine had stood on the steps of a downtown church and shouted that he disbelieved everything he had ever said, and that there was no salvation of any kind for men so far as he could learn or guess.

The financial world was in a panic. The crack of the suicide's pistol was heard in every city. Diplomats, laden with amazing plots and exposures, were hurrying back to the governments that called in vain upon people to defend their threatened territories. The world was seething.

Harkness' eye lit upon a full-page advertisement, and he realized that here indeed was the fulfillment of that Golden Age for which the advertising men had long been clamoring. He wondered if "Truth in Advertising" really satisfied them, now that they had it. Unquestionably the result contained such a wallop as no ad writer had ever before put into type.

The department store ad that Harkness was looking at was like the confessions of Captain Kidd.

Of course the scientists were busy with the tremendous event. A con-

ference of the most eminent pundits had been hastily called. The learned doctors had spent the forenoon calling each other liars—so they had nothing new to report.

The most probable solution of the mystery was offered by an obscure astronomer who pointed out unique arrangement of certain planets as the source of the phenomenon.

Harkness threw away the paper and hurried back to his office. It was deserted. The "help" had gone.

He sat down at his desk and pondered the situation. His business, he was sure, would become obsolete. Surely the big profits would evaporate out of it. He doubted if anybody could ever again get very rich, and so that didn't worry him. He wasn't even sure that he cared about carrying on the business.

He wandered down into the street. People were running wildly about. The newspapers were issuing extra upon extra. There was such plethora of sensation that world developments called for a new front page every instant.

Harkness met the local prohibition enforcement chief pushing a banana cart filled with bottles that bore once-familiar labels. Harkness accosted him.

"Have you been shaking down somebody," he asked.

"Not in the usual way," responded the sober-visaged official. "I got this load out of the basement of the Federal Building. I'm going down here to a dance hall where people appreciate genuine pre-war goods. Come along and we'll throw a party."

Harkness hesitated for just an instant. Then he put a hand to the cart and helped push it down the street to a big dance ball, usually deserted at that hour, but now crowded with revellers.

While his companion stood at the door and distributed his wares, Harkness went inside. He was soon whirling dizzily across the big hall in the vortex of a human maelstrom.

that laughed and yelled and chattered.

The voluptuous creature with whom Harkness was dancing yanked him several times, rather more informally than even the circumstances warranted, he thought. Finally she stopped and said angrily,

"Why don't you go over and sit in the gallery and look on? I simply won't carry you around this hall any more. Are you wearing a ball and chain on one of your legs?"

Harkness felt that he had been grossly insulted. Yet as he made his way out to the edge of the crowd, sharp twinges and shooting pains reminded him that the pace had been a little fast.

"I will try a little stimulation," he said to himself as he pushed through toward the cart. It was empty.

Harkness dashed back into the hall. He danced again, and again his partner said uncomplimentary things. In a trembling panic of haste he sought

around through the crowd for somebody who would be agreeable.

He met a dazzling girl whom he remembered as one of a bacchanalian crowd with which he had been wont to hold "incorporation meetings" in the old days.

As a drowning man might clutch at a plank, he seized her arm.

"I've been looking all over for somebody like you," he shouted, boisterously. The gay crowd seethed and churned about them.

"Oh, Mr. Harkness," she said, as she gently drew her arm away. "I'd like to be nice to you, but really you must know as well as anyone that the facts are—"

"I don't want to hear it, I don't want to hear it," yelled Harkness as he rushed frenziedly from the building to join others like himself who were hysterically howling that not only had the delightful cozenage of former years departed, but that now they could not even "kid" themselves.



The Three Laments

By William Seagle

A FOX, a steer, and a sheep met on the edge of a wood, and took to complaining thus of man:

"To think," snarled the fox, "that I am hunted for my skin. I adorn careless woman. . . ."

"Oh," lowed the steer, his eyes moist, "my hide is turned into leather to beat on dirty roads and the pavements of city streets. . . ."

The sheep appeared to be the most distressed of the three.

"My skin, my skin," it bleated piteously, "is used for diplomas. . . ."



Homo Sap

By Jay Jarrod

I

IT is quite possible to philosophize on man in terms of other men, but how can one intelligently discuss woman without introducing a man?

II

A really sensible fellow is often highly diverted by the most nonsensical of things. It is only the pseudo-savant who invariably turns up his nose at life's absurdities.

III

Surely the happiest of men is he who is able to forget most easily.

IV

The mind of the average fellow is a storeroom of jumbled and juggled facts. The most clearly defined are those that have to do with his emotions; the haziest, those that have to do with his judgment.

V

This is not an age in which the clever man succeeds, but the shrewd one.

VI

A fool follows his own opinions; so does the wise man.

VII

The type of fellow who is invariably steadfast in his opinions is usually he of small imagination.

VIII

How absurd to judge the worth of a man by his mode of living! It is equivalent to judging him by his taste in Japanese prints, by his ability to order dinner, by his knowledge of stalactite crystals, by the brand of his garters. . . .

IX

The egotism of man is perhaps his greatest hindrance; just as it is also his greatest asset.



The Secret

By Edith Foley

IT is often assumed that a beautiful woman's jealousy is ordinarily aroused by seeing other beautiful women admired. This is not true. What really enrages her is to see love offered to a woman less charming than she is herself. The spectacle of a homely woman adored is to her the deepest of all insults because it lessens in her own eyes the value of all the love she has received.



Chameleon

By Nancy Hoyt

I

"THE best pair of legs in St. Moritz," said Yvonne, thrusting them out in front of her and turning up her feet in the little stubby-toed, pouting shoes.

"Préjelan, pure Préjelan," said Kennard and drew imaginary curves with his cigarette.

"The legs, yes," Baron Hennessy agreed in his meticulous voice. The Baron's was a papal title that combined with his last name was not felicitous. He did interior decorations and sometimes designed peignoirs in his leisure hours. With a slight critical pursing of his lips he went on.

"But not the rest, no. That is too tall, too modern. Perhaps you are a Domergue or Drian or that Spanish man, Masset."

"When you've quite decided between you just what I'm like," drawled Yvonne slowly, "perhaps one of you will open the door and let in that unhappy waiter who has knocked repeatedly."

"It would take more than the Baron and I to decide just what you are like, my dear," said Kennard, opening the door for an awkward and apologetic young waiter, who carried in the tea-tray, arranged it in front of Miss Carten and withdrew quickly. "And it's always the other people who worry about the difficulty of describing you, isn't it? You complacently know yourself unique and leave it at that."

"I'm supposed to represent a glass of Chartreuse this afternoon, Jimmie. Do you like this thing?" Yvonne

laughed the odd neighing laugh and wrapping the tea-gown around her, attitudinized in the exaggerated poses of a fashion plate.

Indeed, she was like one of those fashion sketches, chic and impossibly svelte—sketches that are so much more thrilling than the actual photograph of the frocks which show them on mere human beings with human figures, often stumpy and badly proportioned. The tea gown was of chartreuse colored satin, smooth and liquid looking, and Yvonne wore it inimitably.

Her frizzy pale gold hair was pulled into a great knot at the back of her head and long gold filigree earrings dangled at her ears. And then the face, powdered white over a naturally white skin, held an expression of quizzical sophistication. For one's face at nineteen, no matter how world-weary and blasé one may feel inside, does not look entirely sophisticated without the aid of make-up.

Yvonne, looking critically at her reflection in the mirror over the marble mantelpiece, added still more cerise to an already vivid mouth. She had a funny mouth, more Easter-bunny than cupid's-bow to start with, but trained for several years to a cynical smile, that expressed a languid *je-m'en-fichisme*.

Long eyes she had, surprisingly blue, under wearily painted lids, a straight nose and practically no chin at all. Not that it was a receding chin, but simply the smallest model of the ordinary aggressive variety. In this firm little chin was a small cleft or a large dimple, whichever you

chose to call it. Yvonne preferred it to be a cleft—dimples were too *jeune fille*.

"I really must get some green powder to go with this thing. Or would mauve be better? I'm awfully glad you like it though, because it represents the last stretching of my credit at Poiret."

The door was discreetly rapped and without waiting for an answer the Comtess Liliass Hohenthal walked into the room, shaking cold air and melted snowdrops from her fox furs. She peeled long suede gloves off, set aside her wraps and relaxed with a sigh of ease into an armchair.

"I like this better than the *Suvretta*," she said, fumbling in her handbag for her cigarette case. "They warm it far better here. Tea, please, and lots of rum in it—I'm frozen."

She looked at Kennard, who provided a match, and lit her cigarette.

"And how is Yvonne?" she said, handing her the cigarette case of Viennese enamel. "You seemed to be amusing yourself well last night with little Count What's-his-name and the Frenchman. Where on earth did you find that costume? It was superb—what there was of it."

Yvonne disregarded the questions and said suddenly, "Have any of you heard? Do you know why I've got you all here together? My dears, the family is making me go to America next month. Imagine me in America! My God, what a fate!"

"Terrible, terrible," said the Baron sympathetically. The other two smiled.

"Why do you go, then?" asked Kennard.

"Because I must. Probably they don't want to go any more than I do, but grandmother sent the money and you know how the Old Man is, always tottering on the verge of bankruptcy. So when it arrived, with absolute instructions that it was to be used for passage-money, he had to do it."

She puffed reluctantly and continued.

"Then mother rather wants to go back. She disapproves of me, you know. She says it's improper for me to stay here at St. Moritz with old Mrs. Sinclair as a chaperon."

"Imagine having to live in America with no one to talk to, nothing to drink, no decent clothes and hundreds of disapproving relatives! Because, of course, they're bound to have heard of my reputation, even over there," she added a little complacently.

Yvonne couldn't help being rather proud of the reputation. Whenever it died down a bit, she resuscitated it by some carefully thought-out escapade. There was the adventure of the bath in one of the fountains of the Tuileries, and the time she and three others had ridden back to London from a dance in Surrey in a privately hired motor bus, when she had climbed off the roof of the bus into an entresol window at the Ritz Hotel at three in the morning; there was the dive from a low-flying hydroplane at Deauville—all of which episodes, and many others, had depleted the family income and patience to the frazzling point.

To have collected the reputation at nineteen of being the hardest, coolest and most adept hand at almost every known form of party is quite an achievement. Yvonne was proud of it.

"So you must leave us, then," said the Countess Liliass. "*C'est dommage, ça*. You will never be quite the same, Yvonne, again. But perhaps it is better—it is a rather dangerous game you play, my child."

"Really, Liliass, one would think you were at least eighty and my grandmother as well, when you talk that way," Yvonne drawled, irritation in her voice. "Show me the sketches you brought, Fluff. I'm fed up with these people's moralizings," and they

turned toward the Baron's neat little portfolio and started examining the contents.

"You think she will change?" said Kennard to the Countess. She nodded.

"But why?" he went on. "Very few girls have such a strong personality at her age. I think she will continue being fascinating and foreign and sophisticated. Only I hope that in her determination to be un-American she will not pass the *femme-du-monde* stage and add a *demi* to it, simply to show off. But change to someone quiet, inconspicuous? No, I don't think so."

"You will see," said the Countess calmly, and drawing a long puff of her cigarette, lazily watched the smoke wreath upward. Then flicking the ash away, with a fine disregard of the hotel carpet, she leaned forward.

"It is quite possible to do so, though," and she smiled thoughtfully. "Look at me, fair, fat and nearly thirty, a tranquil, amiable person with a husband and two babies. I assure you that, however unlikely it seems, I was once just that type. But not at nineteen; I was ten, I think, and powdered, perfumed and fearfully affected."

Kennard started to protest that she exaggerated when suddenly the broad pink face of the Countess faded and he saw a picture which had stuck in his mind for nearly twenty years. A blue autumnal day in Washington, with the air dusted gold with pollen and dust particles, leaves, brown and gilded, choking the gutters and covering the pavements. School children called along the streets, shuffling and rustling through the fallen leaves. Then suddenly the ridiculous, improbable vision! A little girl of nine or ten, dressed in black velvet and carrying a tiny muff of chinchilla, was walking down the street, avoiding with delicate, mincing steps the piles of leaves the others had rustled

through. On one side of her head a small chinchilla hussar's cap was rakishly perched and in the fastening of her coat was pinned a bunch of parma violets, tied, as violets were then, with a lavender silk cord and tassel. She was preceded by a chocolate-colored pomeranian, and a very correct maid followed six paces behind.

But it was her face that was most amazing, for that was powdered, yes, *powdered*, perfectly white and set in an expression of such supercilious disdain, such aristocratic scorn of dirty little boys, that Kennard, standing, shuffling in the gutter, looked anxiously at his hands and hid them behind his back, for the hands of a small boy of eleven are seldom clean enough to bear close inspection. After the vision had passed, her haughty little nose in the air, Kennard brought back his hands, gave a scornful laugh to show how far above a wretched girl he was, spat and said "damn" loudly. He wasn't going to be sneered at by any old girl, even if she was all dressed up. But afterward he seemed to understand Marie Antoinette's expression when she had said, "Why don't they eat cake?"

Kennard looked back at the Countess. This plump, contented lady in expensive furs—could she be the same? He had heard in Washington that the little girl was an Austrian. Her father used to take her out in one of the first motors there. It was considered very large and speedy, the seats, arranged like a "Herdic," so that the occupants faced each other, holding four persons. As a small boy he had often stood admiring the machine.

"Were you ever in Washington?" he asked. She nodded.

"My father was ambassador for three years. It was then, and later in Vienna, that I was so Yvonne-ish. But you don't believe me, I see. Alas," she sighed, "I was thin, then."

"I not only believe, I remember you, dear lady," and he told her the story of the little girl in velvet. She laughed and turned to Yvonne.

"We discuss you, my dear, and we disagree as to whether America will change you."

"Or whether you will change America," added Kennard.

"Why did you remind me of it? I'd quite forgotten. We'd better have some cocktails; it might cheer the party up a bit," and she pushed the little button several times.

Lilias left after Yvonne had fished the third olive out of her third Martini.

"What do Americans say? The most astounding 'capacity,' is it? Yvonne, when you get to the fifth, remember all my good advice and stop." Yvonne rewarded her with a long stare through half-closed lids.

"The Old Man's been dying of it for the last eighteen years, so I see no reason why I won't pull through," she said. "Au revoir; no, it's adieu, this time, isn't it? Good luck, Lilias."

"Good luck, Yvonne."

II

THE next time Kennard saw Yvonne was eight months later. He had waded through the Salon, acres of portraits, symbolical pictures, mauve nudes, green nudes, yellow nudes, eight by twelve paintings of six ladies all quarreling over two pears and a dead fish, still-lives and landscapes, when he suddenly came on a picture surrounded by a large-ish group of people, chattering loudly. Against the background of a gold lacquer screen, Yvonne stood, slim and challenging.

She was dressed in the skating costumes he had seen her wear at the curling rinks outside the Suvretta House, a white wool frock, embroidered in vermillion, a *moujik's* coat of curly white lambskin and

wrinkly Russian boots of scarlet leather. The picture screamed her personality at him. For, though the likeness was good, it was exaggerated in the long eyes, the flaunting lips and the cleft, even larger than life, in her little chin. Still, it was unmistakable and he leaned forward to read the painter's name, "Jean-Paul Mercier," the little Frenchman she knew at St. Moritz. How the man could paint! And Kennard felt a sort of satisfaction in the picture; it seemed to give an assurance, a guarantee of Yvonne's immutability, that refuted Lilias Hohenthal's calm "you will see."

The acres of pictures and statues, these latter necessitating a tour through the first floor, had worn him out to a state where he felt too tired even to look at anything more. This Salon feeling was even worse than an ordinary backache, for the crowd and the general smell of putty and paint added a bad headache to the other. However, the portrait of Yvonne had certainly been worth the trip. And it was just as well to have seen the rest, as people were otherwise liable to describe the whole exhibition at length to you, saying how superb it was and what a pity you had missed it.

III

It was not till next April that Kennard saw Yvonne again. April found him back in Washington, after an absence of many years. In its changing population he discovered only a few familiar faces, so that when Sabina Howard recognized him on the street one day and bore him off to tea, he followed her bizarre figure up the steps of her house with grateful speed. Sabina went upstairs to change into one of her inevitable Fortuny tea-gowns and came back before Kennard had had time to look at all the photographs, chalk sketches and wedding groups that were

propped on the tops of the bookcases all around the room. Next a piece of dulled rose-red and gold Italian brocade, there hung a Swiss cuckoo-clock which played "The Blue Danube" every hour. On the piano a carved Chinese crystal god held in place the runner of machine-made tapestry. A Florentine dagger and other rarities were strewn on an adjacent table. Sabina knew perfectly which were good and which were terrible. The whole room was a crazy quilt of the priceless and the ridiculous, but they amused her as representing her parents' weird catholicity of taste and she left the things intact.

She reappeared in the pleated and quivering gold robe, holding her hand to her brow with an air of intense emotion. She withdrew the hand, stood *distract* for a moment and then rang the bell for tea. Sabina was always intense, emotional and *distract*. When she answered to the telephone the hand was transferred to the region of her heart, as if to withstand shock, although she knew the call was an invitation to dinner or lunch. However, she was handsome, in a large-featured way, amusing and very hospitable, so that a constant stream of friends and acquaintances dined there nearly every night. After pouring tea, she settled back with a cigarette and conversed quite calmly and normally with Kennard.

"Dine here tonight," she said. "Not a party but just one or two people. You probably know them."

"You always say it isn't a party, Sabina," Kennard laughed. "The last time I dined here there was an ambassador and the under-Secretary of State, and you wrote 'No party, just a couple of people you probably know.'"

"Oh, but really, this time it isn't. In fact I'm rather worried about this one. Somehow the atmosphere seems electric. I wonder if I ought to tell you about it?"

"Do tell me," he answered.

She breathed deeply and sighed. Then started her narrative.

"My cousin, Gerald Curtis—do you know him, by the way?" He's horrid—well, anyways Gerald, having reached what he considered the correct age to marry, that is thirty-six—Yes, he must be thirty-six, or is it thirty-four? He's a little younger than I: I never can remember."

Kennard did not dare interrupt this disjointed story with a request for a more direct style, so after a short pause she went on.

"Well, call it thirty-six. He married after long deliberation and brought the girl to live in Boston. He is typically Boston himself—born and raised there and he can't bear any other city except Boston. So everyone thought he'd marry a local product and they were awfully thrilled when he returned with a girl who was sixteen years younger than he and one, who having spent all her life in Europe, was hardly American. Her grandmother lived in New York, and as she is a very correct old lady, Gerald considered her house one of the few places he could afford to be seen at (yes, that's what he would say himself) in the whole city. The first trip he came back to Boston engaged, and two months later they were married."

She turned to Kennard.

"Of course you know I hate him. He is the most priggish, most conventional man in the world, and Yvonne was—"

"Not Yvonne Carten!" Kennard cried. "The same!" interrupted Sabina with a flutter of eyelids. "She is said to have been very wild and pleasure-loving before she married him. At least we heard that, but when you saw her you couldn't believe it, for she was a quiet looking child, not particularly pretty, with mouse colored hair and not enough chin. Her eyes, which are blue, and her white skin were her only beauties. I was visiting in Boston when I met her; it was at luncheon and all

the other women whispered and laughed till she came in and then made up to her, because Gerald is immensely rich and very keen on his 'old family' and other hokum. Aren't I modern, Jimmie, saying 'hokum'?

"Of course she had obviously married for money," continued Sabina resignedly, "Gerald is thirty-six and so unattractive. A foolish *important* little man. Blond and pink, you would expect him to be jolly and good-tempered, until you notice what cold little gray eyes he has. Malevolent eyes, a small waxed mustache and a consequential air. Most unpleasant.

"Poor Yvonne; she didn't get much of the money she married for. Nor would he let her choose her own clothes. Everything was supervised by him; hats, frocks, shoes—everything. And she wasn't allowed to use powder—it didn't look respectable! Finally, she wasn't supposed to even talk to other men. Imagine that."

Sabina shook her head at the thought. Then she lit another cigarette and started again.

"I decided it was time for Yvonne to have a little fun, so I asked them to spend a week here in early spring. As I craftily told Gerald that Washington was very quiet then, except for a few formal dinners, he accepted, and she, of course, agreed with him.

"They arrived two days ago. I didn't do anything that night, but yesterday morning I shoved Gerald off to look at an exhibition of paintings one of my young friends, a darling little French boy, was giving at the Corcoran galleries. Then Yvonne and I went out to the Club, ostensibly to play golf but actually to meet two State Department young men and a diplomat who had obligingly brought along a large thermos. It was out there that I first noticed how attractive Yvonne could be. Her whole expression changed, for the first time I heard her laugh (a funny neighing little laugh) and I also noticed what very pretty ankles she had, even in

the clumsy wool stockings decreed by Gerald.

"She became more and more unlike a mouse, and I watched her consume four of the diplomat's cocktails with evident relish. We got back to the house at half-past one and started to go straight into the dining-room, but in the drawing-room, standing facing us, stood Gerald, holding anger before us like a flaming sword. We both were rather frightened and wondered if he could possibly have found out about our little morning party. However, we soon heard the cause of the fury. He had been down to the Corcoran, had seen the one-man show; horrible modern pictures of decadent looking women, with large eyes and long necks; (you know Mercier's things? Aren't they wonderful?) and among these portraits was one of Yvonne, but *what* an Yvonne! Painted, provocative, dressed in scarlet and white, with an expression of utter sophistication on her exotic face. This, the wife of Gerald Curtis! This, a prominent young Boston matron!"

Mercier! Jean-Paul! Yvonne's friend of St. Moritz. . . . And the portrait Kennard had seen in Paris—that *farouche* thing! So beautiful, so sinister. . . . He gasped, and foresaw what is called "complications." His hostess continued her narrative—

"All Yvonne said was, 'So Jean is here'; and this infuriated Gerald still further. I told him not to be foolish, told him that he would probably like Mercier, whom I expected to dine with us tonight. Did everything, in fact, to smooth things. Gerald became quiet, then. After lunch, when Yvonne was out of the room, he asked me to telephone Mercier and try to negotiate for the sale of the portrait, I suppose I looked astonished, for he said,

"Can't you see I'd rather pay anything than have the horrible thing down there?"

"I saw that there was no use telling Gerald that the portrait was a

work of art and very wonderful, that it was only his priggishness and prudery that made him hate it. So I gave in and telephoned Jean."

Kennard's look of resigned comprehension must have satisfied Sabina, for she proceeded—

"It was a little hard to explain to him over the 'phone, but when he understood that it was Yvonne's husband who wanted the picture, he agreed to sell it. He had not heard that she was married, he said. Also, it was plain that he thought Gerald had been seized with a violent admiration for the 'Portrait de Mademoiselle Y.,' and wanted to cherish it as a perfect likeness of his dear wife. You see, Jean hadn't seen Yvonne in over a year. And I hadn't known when I asked him to dinner that Yvonne and he had ever met. They seemed to have known each other in France or St. Moritz.

"Gerald kept hissing at me to tell him to bring the painting round the next night. Mercier asked why this was necessary, but finally gave in and said he would, as his exhibition came to a close that afternoon. When everything was arranged I said '*a demain*' and rang off. Well, we'll see tonight what happens."

IV

THAT night Kennard felt distinctly nervous at meeting Yvonne again. Several of the people were provided to suit Gerald's strict tastes, a Miss Du Laine and one of the men from the British Embassy and his wife, a perfect model of the English gentlewoman, formerly the pride of one of the first families of Kalamazoo, Michigan—one of those American wives who out-Herod Herod in their Englishness. The rest were a cheery lot, gathered for Yvonne's benefit; ten altogether.

However, the dinner seemed to go all right. Sabina lost her worried look, seeing them talking and laughing. Yvonne, when she saw Gerald

engrossed with Mrs. Fotheringay (the British gentlewoman) let her glass be refilled and seemed happy enough, though a little on edge. Mercier and she laughed over mutual jokes. Gerald glared several times.

She really was particularly meekly gotten up, though. Grey chiffon dress, hair very smooth, feet just barely showing—so different from his last view of her that she was almost unrecognizable except for the funny dimpled chin.

After dinner they all went into the drawing-room and Sabina breathed a sigh of relief. Gerald stood in the doorway, buttoning and unbuttoning his white kid gloves. He was the only one who wore them, and they looked incongruous. Suddenly he spoke.

"Where's the picture?" he asked.

Mercier pointed to the corner where it stood, covered by a cloth. Gerald removed from his note case a cheque and handed it to him.

"Five thousand—the price agreed on," he said. Mercier bowed and took it from him.

Gerald crossed the room, tore the cover off the portrait and for one moment they saw it, that thrilling and challenging and wonderful thing. The next moment Gerald picked up the Florentine dagger and was slitting the portrait to pieces.

What faces, what staring masks they all had! It was as if an invisible fog suddenly filled the room, cutting off each man from his neighbor. The eyes of all slowly moved toward Yvonne. She, white as paper, stood up for a moment still. Her face seemed brittle. The instant was like agony.

Then she ran from the room.

Mercier's nostrils were pinched and drawn with the effort of control. As for Gerald, he started buttoning and unbuttoning those gloves again. Finally, after a ghastly silence, the painter looked down at his hand. He saw the cheque in it. Then he slowly tore it into little bits.

They fluttered down onto the car-

pet lightly, capriciously, and lay there, tiny squares of scattered white. One of the women gasped and in the uneasy silence it was like a shriek. But it burst the dam and a cataract of hysterical chatter ensued.

Then, and Kennard would have sworn it couldn't have been more than five minutes after she left them, he heard Yvonne descending the stairs. She pulled back the curtain and stood there—not the Yvonne of dinner, but the "Portrait de Mademoiselle Y.," herself! The very same person they had seen slashed to bits a few minutes before. Heavens knows how she did it in that time, but from

her high white fur cap to the red leather Russian boots, she was identical. And the face! Powdered white, dead white, with weary mauve eyelids and lips brilliant cerise on that pallor.

Very quickly she looked around. Very deliberately she walked up to Mercier and, simply, laid her hand on his arm. He bowed with the most perfect courtesy. The two stepped forward together as by one impulse. He held aside the curtain for her and followed her out of the room.

The sound of the front door slamming clamored on the ears of those who huddled grotesquely in the drawing-room.



The Smart Set and the Short Story

SMART SET'S place in the field of the short story has been unique for more than twenty years. The record of unusual work published in that time is a long and distinguished one and includes much of the best in modern American writing.

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SMART SET encourages youth. Its policy always has been to welcome the newcomer. It has always sought quality, never names. Its aim is to print the best fiction available in the belief that its readers will recognize it as such.

On that basis SMART SET will continue.

Six of Them

By Myrtle Meyer Eldred

AS the door of the small cottage opened, a heavy, half-grown boy, blank of face, was thrust out onto the porch and down the steps, propelled by a vicious shove between his protesting shoulders. He fell sprawling on the grass. A loud, angry voice blared after him:

"Get up . . . you blockhead! Get them grasshoppers! Six of them . . . remember . . . no more . . . no less!"

The boy lay where he fell, soggily inert. Then he raised his head and addressed the black, angry face.

"I wants to know what for? What do I have to get 'em for?"

John Thorp started toward him threateningly, the blue veins distended on his shining, liver-red forehead; but his wife flew past him and down to the prostrate figure. She pulled the boy to his feet, dusted him energetically, and with her apron wiped his face as if it had been made of wax.

"Be a good boy, now, Clydie, and do what your Pa asks. It don't take long. Just six grasshoppers is all he wants. It always makes him mad to have you ask him so many questions. Run now . . . run fast, for mother!"

There was a puzzled frown on the boy's face and his light eyes searched him mother's beseechingly.

"But I wants to know what for, Ma?"

She gave him a gentle push and glanced swiftly toward the doorway. The man had disappeared.

"Now you run like a good boy, and some day maybe we'll know all about

it." She nodded her head and whispered seductively. "Maybe it's something that you and me'll get the good of. Your Pa's smart . . . and if he wants grasshoppers . . . he knows why. Now run!"

He started off amblingly, large of foot, light of hair and eye, with only the uncertainty of his steps and the vacant, constant smile to show the condition of his poor mind.

Clyde had been a good baby. Never kept his mother up a night. Ate what was fed him without a whimper. She remembered how easy it had been to leave him with almost anyone when she went off to work by the day. That was before she married John Thorp.

Then that horrible night when John discovered that the child was hers by a former marriage, and not her sister's, as he had been led to believe. Annie had held the pink faced, smiling baby out to him beseechingly, and he had taken it from her arms and thrown it violently to the floor, cursing.

The baby had given one terrible scream and then lapsed into unconsciousness. All that night he lay writhing in convulsions. The man, thoroughly frightened at his act, had hurried for the doctor and the three of them had worked unceasingly to bring him out of the spasm. Four hours of torment; of mouth-frothing, jerking, fever-burning unconsciousness—and then natural sleep had come.

He continued to be a good baby,

but as he grew older he gave in response to their words only a vacant smile. He progressed a little, he learned to make himself intelligible, he even used his hands awkwardly. He was harmless and gentle, but Annie had no illusions. He would always be queer. The doctor said so.

Annie had taken what pleasure she could in Clyde's big, sound body, and grieved silently over his immature mind. She was like some fiercely defensive hen in behalf of her crippled chick. No one was allowed in her presence to intimate that Clyde was different from other children. She sent him to school, shining and creaseless, his shirts stiff with starch, his Windsor bows immaculately tied. He sat there all day looking at the pictures in the reader, learning here and there a word, seeing class after class pass on, while he remained behind. Ever so often out of sheer pity the teacher moved him to the next higher grade; and there, too, he sat, content with the new book; smiling . . . smiling . . .

On Sundays he took the two or three pennies his mother gave him, and holding them closely in his large, damp palm, went to Sunday school. There he received a colored picture at which he gazed in rapture and brought home and treasured like a jewel. He hid the pictures away under piles of his clothes and took them out to shuffle and pore over. There was one of which he never seemed to tire. It was a solid, brilliant blue, dotted with swirls of cottony clouds, the border raised like the frame of a picture. In these celestial regions sat three figures. One, a woman, with long golden hair, and robes of white. On each side sat men. Clyde knew that they were men, for despite their white robes, they had golden beards, parted in the middle and flowing away to each side. On their knees rested harps, thickly crusted with powdered gilt; and the long, pink tinted fingers of each of them rested delicately on the

strings. Below was a verse. Clyde's mother read it to him often in that falsely sweet voice reserved for things pertaining to Heaven and God.

"Never soil your tongue with lies;
Never turn your hands to sin;
This is Heaven, children dear,
When you die, you enter in."

The superintendent of the Sunday School was of the opinion that these cards were of much influence. In Clyde's case he was right. Clyde was tremendously impressed. He asked his mother the meaning of sin and lies, and she explained patiently. He thought of his tongue as being dipped in lies as if in black paint; and of his hands busy with sins, that crawled over and over them like ants. He determined to keep his hands free from these crawling sins, and his tongue clean of lies. Then he would never lose his chance to "enter in."

His mother encouraged him in the idea. She told him constantly how good he was. He must continue this way. He must never steal or lie or fail to "mind." Then he too would go to Heaven. He would be one of the group of golden-haired celestials who all day sat idly, surrounded by colorful skies, hands resting delicately on sweet-toned harps. She felt it a blessing that this reward held in view kept him from evil. What might not happen if his poor twisted brain were his only guide to ethics.

Now remembering that he must mind, as she bade him, he shuffled off, stumbling sometimes, because his eyes failed to see quickly enough the obstacles at his feet. He came to the empty lot across the street, and his mother, watching anxiously, could see him bobbing about awkwardly, hopping up and down. But when he came back to the house he had the six grasshoppers jumping frantically in the glass Mason jar she had given him.

His reward was a handful of cookies, which he ate greedily, the crumbs falling in a stream from his

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mouth. He wondered now why he had made a fuss. The cookies were good. But something in him always rebelled at this daily quest for grasshoppers. The mystery of it. The fury of his father when he questioned him. And yet he never dared forget. Every day he must go. Every day.

At first he had thought it fun. That had been when the first warm weather began. He had played that he too was a grasshopper.

Then the neighbor children had seen him and quizzed him on his strange behavior.

"What do you do over there in the lot, hopping around?"

"I ketch grasshoppers," he told them proudly.

"Aw yah, you do," they said derisively. "Tell us something else. Tell us something we can believe. Ketching grasshoppers! What for? Tell us that?"

He had stood his ground. "I do ketch 'em every day. I do . . . I do! Six of 'em . . . no more . . . no less . . ." It was the formula.

"Grasshoppers! Grasshoppers!" they shrilled at him. "Suppose now you'll tell us you're training them . . . like fleas. The grasshopper boy with his jumping, hopping, tobacco-spitting, trained grasshoppers!"

Hysterical at their own wit, they went off twirling imaginary wheels in their heads, winking at each other.

"The grasshopper boy . . . the grasshopper boy!" they shrieked at him. "You sure got 'em . . . but not in your hands . . . in your head."

When no one was near him and they met him, they whispered mysteriously, "Ketches grasshoppers . . . he does . . . six of 'em . . . no more . . . no less."

He grew red and incoherent, stamping his big, clumsy feet, almost crying.

"I do . . . I do . . . I do-ketch 'em!"

But their derisive cries rang in his ears long after they had departed. "Grasshopper boy . . . grasshopper

boy!" He began to hate this thing he had to do.

His stepfather was a motorman on one of the long car runs. They needed no conductors on the Exira lines, for the motorman sat in front of the car and the passengers as they entered put their fares in the glass box that stood at his shoulder. The box had two partitions, one for the nickels that went rattling through a devious metal route until they reached a safe haven at the bottom of the glass; the other side for the tickets, six for a quarter, twelve for fifty, that were thrust through a slit and fell to the bottom.

When Clyde rode with his stepfather, which he did whenever his mother was busy sewing or washing and didn't want to have him on her mind, the fascination of the box held his eyes. He sat on a stool by his father's side and watched the nickels clatter through the contrivance, hampered in their journey by the metal slides, and yet always reaching the bottom safely. It was a continual wonder.

Then, when the car was empty at the end of the lines, he could watch the turn-table. The process of heading the car in the opposite direction for its return trip charmed him.

But since early spring his father had refused to take him riding. In spite of his wife's reproachful eyes, he persisted that he couldn't be bothered. The kid made him nervous. He was too big to be sitting up there. He looked . . . well she knew what he looked like . . . he felt sorry for him, but there was no use making a show of him. He was better off at home. Instead, occasionally, he gave him a nickel, an unheard of generosity, and told him to buy himself an ice cream cone and forget the car rides. Maybe—when it got colder.

Then one day, in his father's off hours, three men came to the house to see him. Clyde looked at them in bewilderment. He knew that they

were not other car men, who in blue uniforms often sat on the porch, smoking evil-smelling pipes, and talking. These men talked quietly, but what they said turned Thorp's face white and silenced his ready tongue.

Clyde crept close to the window outside, stiffened to attention. Behind the dusty morning glory, its green stem curling round and round the dirty, knotted cord, he could huddle and hear without being seen. He sat on the moist ground, aware of the odor of the earth, of the blue and purple and red morning glories, now wrinkled and shut, and listened to the constant bombardment of various toned voices.

"You may as well own up, Thorp—we have the dope on you. I'll admit you're clever. I never heard of using grasshoppers just that way before. But you can't deny the evidence of the grasshopper leg. Little things like that, Thorp, are what turn the tables against you fellows that think you are putting it all over on a corporation. We'll hand it to you . . . you had us guessing for some time. And then we got a man out from the city, and had him watching you for a week. He saw you let a grasshopper down in the money box on a thread and pull him up carrying some tickets between his legs. He saw you do this two or three times at the end of every run, by the turn-table. And we know, too, that you've been selling those tickets at the drug store. Making a pretty good thing out of it too. Own up now, we're right, aren't we?"

"Grasshoppers!" said Thorp, his face red, "you're crazy. Do you think you are going to get anyone to believe a story like that?"

"Believe it! We're going to prove it. Now look here, Thorp," said the voice doggedly. "No use keeping up that bluff. It won't go with us. We saw you do it. And what's more, when we turned those tickets out of the machine we found a grasshopper leg among them."

Grasshopper! Grasshopper! The boy was listening intently.

"The company has been suspicious of you for some time," the voice continued. "That run of yours is one of the best in town . . . and it's been bringing in the smallest returns since early spring. We've had you timed at the turn-table, and we've found that you take longer to make that turn than any other motorman. Ten minutes, to be exact. But you haven't been idle in that ten minutes. Been making quite a bit of change in that ten minutes, eh, Thorp? Don't seem like very much . . . didn't hardly think we'd notice such a little thing, did you? Just making a little change, hey? You didn't think it made a bit of difference to the company, did you?"

"Hell!" said Thorp. "It looks like I was laying away a pile, don't it?" His eyes swept the poorly furnished room swiftly.

"All right . . . we'll admit you don't show any evidence of prosperity. That isn't the point . . . but here's something else. We know that brat of yours has been out hunting grasshoppers every afternoon. The children around here have seen him. He admits it. He boasts of it. How do you explain that?"

Clyde strained his ears to hear his father's voice.

"You're crazy, that's all I can say. I get them tickets regular. Get them for the convenience of the customers. Grasshoppers! You know you're talking like fools."

"But you don't deny," persisted the man, "that your boy is helping you steal by getting those grasshoppers for you, every day. You don't deny that?"

"I deny everything!" said Thorp sharply. "He's off his bean. You don't pay no attention to what an idiot says, do you?"

"He's helping you steal," cried the man.

Steal! . . .

Something clicked in Clyde's head like a swiftly turned shutter that obliterates an old view and brings into position a new one. He seemed to see before him a brilliant, blue card and three white robed figures fingering harps, thickly incrustated with gilt. The man had said he had helped steal. His mother had said that stealing was a sin; and the card. . . . His hands had been busy with sins—and now he could not "enter in." He felt hot and red behind the eyes. He hated his father with a terrible intensity that was like knives sticking into him. He had never told him what the grasshoppers were for. If he had known! And now his father would not tell the men that he took the grasshoppers. . . . He was dipping his tongue in black paint lies. And he, who had done nothing wrong, had lost his chance for Heaven. His brain was all a-muddle with the puzzle of it, and his body flaming with an inarticulate sense of injustice. He could no longer stay by the window . . . but got up and ran, ran blindly, stumbling into the field. He picked up a Mason jar in the ditch.

Twenty minutes later the men rose to leave. They were baffled and angry, feeling like fools. Coaxing, threatening, bullying had availed

them nothing. The worst they had been able to do to Thorp was to discharge him with a bad record. They had failed to make him confess, and they could not help but feel that the evidence was too fantastic for use in court. He persisted stubbornly that they were crazy; that they were accusing him unjustly; there were no grasshoppers . . . he had stolen nothing . . . he got the tickets regular.

They stopped at the door for a last threatening word. A confused sound arose down the street, a sound of yells and derisive shouts:

"Grasshopper boy! Show us your grasshoppers. Grasshopper boy! Show us your jumping, hopping, tobacco-spitting grasshoppers! You train 'em, grasshopper boy!"

A half-grown boy, red of face, stumbling, his eyes alight with an angry and incoherent bewilderment, rushed past the men and up to Thorp. The three, struck to sudden dumbness by the apparition, hung awkwardly by the porch.

Clyde thrust a Mason jar of frantically jumping grasshoppers into his father's stony face.

"Tell 'em, Pa," he begged breathlessly. "Tell 'em I don't train 'em. I ketches 'em for you—every day—six of them—no more—no less—grasshoppers! . . . tell 'em . . . !"



Call

By Mavis Clare Barnett

They tell me first love is the best
And not forgotten like the rest.
. . . Then why don't you come back to see
If you have quite forgotten me?



Sweet Grapes

By Charles G. Shaw

JONES carefully measured a third of a glassful of Italian vermouth and poured it into a great, chased, silver shaker. Then he added twice the amount of gin, dropped in a few bits of broken ice, squeezed the juice of half a lemon, and shook the mixture for several moments. The result was three golden cocktails which he consumed within the space of fifteen minutes. It was half-past six, and a warm autumn twilight stole in through the semi-open window. How well he felt! Especially after he had polished off the third "snifter."

The evening was before him, and he had made up his mind to pass it enjoyably. Of course there were his clubs, his friends, his books; but it was something novel he craved: something with a touch of surprise. How should he go about it was the question.

Lazily he strolled across the room, and plucked a gardenia from the wedgewood vase that stood on a side table, and slipped it into his button-hole. Then he picked up the evening paper. The news of the day failed to interest him. There was the wrangle between capital and labor, the usual amount of crime, the same tiresome events in the world of society, and the customary stock-market jargon. But suddenly his wandering gaze was arrested, and folding the sheet, he scrupulously studied a particular portion of it. It was the theatrical section. The problem of the evening

was solved! First, he would partake of an excellent dinner, at a restaurant he often visited in West Fifty-sixth street, and afterward attend the latest musical success, *Oh, Baby!*

Having telephoned an agency and obtained a seat in the second row on the aisle, Jones mixed a fourth cocktail that produced a most delightful glow throughout: then he glanced at himself in the long cheval-glass by the bed, readjusted his already immaculate tie, and brushed an imaginary speck of dust off the bosom of his spotless shirt. How perfectly his dinner coat fitted! How well groomed he felt! He puffed his cigarette and smiled contentedly. A few minutes later he was on the sidewalk.

As the dusk of evening unspread its folds, the magic of the metropolis seemed to cast its spell about him. He was enchanted, fascinated, joyous. There was thrill in the air; there was a tingling of the unexpected about to take place, and he throbbed at the thought of it. Arrived at the restaurant, he was ushered to a corner table, while the headwaiter proceeded to suggest the most expensive and least appetizing dishes on the menu. But he waved them away, and ordered a not elaborate but well planned dinner, the *piece de resistance* of which was a steak *Chateaubriand Bernaise*. A quart of sparkling *Grañano*, surreptitiously served in a tea-pot, furnished the stimulant for the repast, while a small coffee and Panch Oranga cigar topped it off. After

that, he summoned a taxi, and was borne to the theatre in the height of exuberance.

"Got a couple down front," advised a swarthy speculator, but Jones merely smiled upon him pityingly, and collecting his ticket at the box-office, was shown to his seat.

The curtain had been up for several minutes, and the comic scene was in progress which singularly amused Jones, who applauded vociferously. Then there was a love duet, introducing the ladies of the ensemble, followed by a costume number.

Jones suddenly found himself staring at a black-eyed girl, who took the part of a French mannequin, and was soon unable to remove his gaze. She seemed quite the loveliest creature he had ever beheld, and it was not long before it was obvious to Jones, not to mention two rather pompous old ladies near him, that his ocular attentions were not entirely wasted. A glance at the program told him that the young person's name was Florence Montgomery. His chest swelled with impudence as he strode up the aisle, and snatched the door-check from the fellow at the entrance, with an air of impatience born of importance. Then he hurried around to the stage-door, where he scribbled a note, inviting Miss Montgomery to sup with him at the latest and most fashionable restaurant in town. This he entrusted, with a neatly folded bill for tip, to the doorman who insisted that he would return with an answer in a few seconds. Jones lit a cigarette, walked to the corner, and returned. Ten minutes later the fellow appeared, announcing that "she said it was all right." What a beautiful thing life was!

The second and final act was of much the same texture as the first. There was the same brand of song and humor: there was the same type of situation and dialogue. But Jones enjoyed it all immensely, and continued his ardent flirtation with the little

maiden of the black eyes. Yes, he reflected, there was thrill in store for him. The world was full of romance and glamour, if one only went about it in the proper way.

Twenty minutes subsequent to the fall of the final curtain found Jones once more at the stage-door. He had smoked thirteen cigarettes in the last quarter of an hour, and started nervously forward as the various members of the company issued forth. Each minute seemed a century. Had the girl deceived him, and left by another exit? he wondered, but dismissed the thought almost immediately. The idea was too ridiculous. He smoked three more cigarettes: then the door opened and she appeared! But was it she? Surely no, for the face he beheld was far from that of a beautiful little girl. The lustre had vanished from her eyes, and her cheeks were hollow and pale. She wore an ill-fitting suit of green serge, and a tawdry black straw hat was jammed tightly on her head.

"Mister Jones?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Why—er—yes. Yes, I'm Jones," he began, slowly recovering from the shock, "I'm so glad you were able to come."

"Oh, I feel just like stepping out, tonight. And, you know, I'm crazy about the Club Dansant."

"Yes," Jones responded weakly, "yes, it's nice there. But do you think you might like somewhere else better? Now, there's the Little—"

"No, I like the Dansant better than anywhere else. It's ree-fined and sort of clubby. *You* know."

"Yes, that's so. Well, I suppose we ought to get a taxi. We might first go for a little while to that new place on Fifty-second—"

"You mean The Gangplank?" she interrupted. "Oh, say, it's awful. The Dansant's got it all over The Gangplank." And away they sped amidst the roaring and rumbling of the night life traffic. Jones fidgeted

at his collar, and huskily cleared his throat: the exhilaration of the alcohol had completely worn off.

"Oh, Gee! There's Mabel Lagrue," volunteered his companion. "She's with her boy friend."

The cab turned a corner and drew up at the curb. Jones alighted, and assisted his newly-made acquaintance to the street: then he paid off the driver, and taking in a deep breath, entered the Club Dansant.

With no little difficulty, due to the number of earlier patrons, he succeeded in checking his hat and, somewhat awkwardly, followed Florence into the elevator which was crowded with well dressed men and handsomely gowned women. He was beginning to feel curiously out of the picture.

"Table for two?" repeated the headwaiter. "It will take a few minutes. It is a very busy night."

A group of chattering youths and flappers passed into the room; were immediately attended to, while Jones and the girl remained standing at the door. Not far away were Harry Dumar and his wife. They were both eyeing Jones carefully, but suddenly became interested in the label on a ginger ale bottle, when he glanced in their direction. The dance floor was jammed to the point of suffocation.

"This way, sir," announced a second headwaiter, and the couple were escorted to a flowerstand disguised as a table, in a distant corner of the room.

"What would you like?" falteringly inquired Jones, when they were seated.

"Oh, I'll have a stuffed tomato and some fruit salad."

"Bring me some scrambled eggs," ordered Jones, and the waiter dashed off.

The music struck up and his heart sank. Of course he asked Florence to dance, and, of course, she accepted. Most of the time she was out of step, while Jones' terpsichorean efforts

proved strangely ineffective. The couple were bumped and buffeted on all sides and, with sighs of relief, they returned to their table as the music ceased. A few futile attempts to inflate the conversation ended in dismal failure, and there followed several minutes of complete silence. What to do? To have left immediately would have looked absurd. To have been merry was quite impossible. He racked his brain for an answer, for some solution. Then, suddenly, he happened to glance in the direction of a table a few feet away—a table occupied by a couple of men and, as he looked, he observed that the younger of the two was attempting a flirtation with his companion—a flirtation with Florence! What could it mean? He was flabbergasted.

"You don't know what you missed when you didn't order salad, too," the girl told Jones, and he smiled foolishly in assent. His mind refused to function. Perhaps he had underestimated her loveliness, after all; and again he glanced around the room. This time he beheld another fellow doing his utmost to engage Florence's attention. What did it all mean? Two men after his girl! There could be no doubt. She had actually attracted them. He had been a jackass. That was it. She was really a very pretty girl.

"I want to speak to the Captain," he whispered to the waiter, and immediately proceeded to order a bottle of bootleg whiskey. Things were rapidly improving.

"Just a mild one with me," entreated Jones, as he poured her a long highball. How lovely she looked as she sipped it! The next dance was a wholly different affair. Jones whirled and glided with amazing ease, while his feet performed all varieties of wonderful steps. And as the night progressed, everything became more and more delightful. How good the music sounded! How gay every-

one seemed! And what a charming little thing Florence was!

"I know a place that stays open all night," he informed her, as the final strain of the orchestra echoed through the room.

* * * * *

A pale lilac dawn crept slowly over the dull gray house tops as a taxicab crawled lazily down St.

Nicholas Avenue. In it reclined a single occupant—Jones. His hair was disheveled, and the bow of his tie had slipped under his right ear; his eyes were puffy and glazed. But in his hand he clasped a little lace handkerchief which he would occasionally caress and then smile to himself, a silly, sickly, sentimental smile.



Parting

By Helen Constance Pitt

SUNSET and the end of the day—
The harvest moon and the end of the summer—

I have seen you, touched you, known you, now I am content.
Once I dreamed of you, but ever in my dreams you eluded me.
Disappearing just when I had thought to touch you.
Now I have been folded in your arms.
Henceforth my dreams must ever give you back to me with growing glory
of fulfilment.
Until upon some sweet, gay day, my heart shall rest on yours once more . . .

Twilight and the first white star—
The scarlet leaves and the beginning of bright Autumn. . .



MANY a woman's sole regret is that she can't divorce the same husband
twice.



THE prettiest sight of all is a talkative woman asleep.



The Witch of Erivan

By Ellis O. Briggs

I

BECAUSE it is often pleasing to watch others experience a sensation which is denied to us, and because he was very curious into the bargain; Captain Vaudrais Pickthorn of His Britannic Majesty's Army, invited his American friend to visit the house of Armaghanean Hanoum, whom men in Constantinople called the Witch of Erivan. Not that Vaudrais himself believed in witchcraft, but he was interested in its effect, if any, on George Markam.

"What do you say, shall we go in and take a look at the old lady?"

"Which old lady?" The American detached himself from a Russian refugee who was trying to sell him paper flowers and turned an inquiring eye upon the captain.

"Armaghanean Hanoum, the Witch of Erivan." And Vaudrais went on with his previously constructed explanation. "She lives in a house down the next alley. See where the people are crowded together ahead of us? Come on," he urged.

The British Captain walked ahead, Markam at his heels. At the end of the alley he had pointed out, Vaudrais paused. The air ahead was murky with cigarette smoke. A hundred people—Levantines, Europeans and Turks—filled the diminutive passage. The apex of the crowd clustered about the doorway of a dilapidated frame house ten or fifteen rods up the alley.

"The Witch of Erivan," continued the Englishman, "seems to have these people rather under her thumb. It's said that she cast a spell over one of the Whirling

Dervishes. At any rate, now he doesn't dance any more; he sits around near the Golden Horn and howls like a fiend possessed. Sort of a hypnotist, you'd call her."

"A hypnotist . . . hmm." Markam considered and Vaudrais thought that he perceived a certain hesitation.

"It's probably all foolishness, but I think she'd interest you, George. Now that Armaghanean Hanoum has established her reputation, as you might say, she charges everyone fifty piastres to go in, single file. One in about twenty she stops and condescends to do witchcraft for. She must do it for somebody or there wouldn't be this crowd here. I went in the other day and she laughed at me. 'Ah,' she says to me in Turkish, 'You do not believe. You come to me in curiosity. Get out.' Fancy that, to an officer of the Constantinople Inter Allied Police. And I got out. Eyes, that old witch has! But something tells me that when you go in she is going to stop you. In fact, I'll lay you a wager of ten pounds Turkish that she takes you on."

Apparently George Markam was trying to make up his mind. "A hypnotist," he remarked, entirely to himself. "A hypnotist. Done!" he cried suddenly. "Ten pounds, Turkish, Vaudrais."

Captain Pickthorn entered the edge of the crowd, which opened respectfully before him, for Vaudrais wore the brassard of the police. They reached the doorway and the Englishman went in. Five minutes later he came out, wearing a self-conscious smile.

"She threw me out again. Another fifty piastres *taman*, George. Your turn. If you don't appear in five min-

utes, I'll see you at about eleven tomorrow at the hotel to collect. Careful she doesn't jump at you!"

His final glimpse of the Captain being a grin and a wave of the hand, George Markam entered the doorway, his fifty piastre note in his fingers.

The ragged purple paper which passed for currency was taken from him by an Armenian girl who led the way down what seemed endless wooden stairs which corkscrewed as tightly as those of a minaret. Down and down he went, until he reached a curtain at the bottom. He entered the dimly lit cellar of the Witch of Erivan.

The walls of the cellar were boarded. At one side was a door which led into a second chamber. The room was bare except for a table on which a single kerosene lamp burned evilly, sending up flaky ashes and a single thread of black smoke. The air was heavy and lifeless, tainted by a vanished incense.

Behind the table sat a huddled figure whose dark eyes shone with a murky reflection. The woman was wearing a shawl such as Armenians affect on the streets of Pera. It covered her features completely, except for the eyes. About her was bundled a black *mashlak*, so ample that it was impossible to tell whether the figure was fat or slender, old or young.

"Stand here," said Armaghanean Hanoum in French, indicating the spot with a small white hand. The woman's voice was low, almost gruff, muffled by her shawl.

As George Markam moved to the place, the cellar shivered to a weird, high cry, pitched at least four octaves above the normal voice. Her body doubled forward and she seized the right hand of her visitor.

"Ah! At last you have come to me!" she wailed. "I have waited, and you have come! I have dreamed, and you are here! Ah—ah!" Once more the high shriek cut the air. "You are here. You—one in a thousand of men!" The woman changed to Turkish, speaking it with amazing speed.

At her first touch, George Markam shuddered and felt the hair of the back of his neck grow stiff. He could not take his eyes from the eyes of the witch. She began to speak again, in Turkish, and he followed her readily, his hand growing moist in hers.

"You have pointed to the springs of the earth, and there has come forth the priceless liquid; you have been to the corners of the world for this precious liquid; to Punjab—to Palembang—to Shensi—to Commodoro. . . ."

The sounds rose and fell in a regular cadence. The woman of whom he had never heard until fifteen minutes before was naming in order the places George Markam had visited in the past fifteen years as a prospector for oil.

"Sit down," she commanded in French.

The man seated himself on a wooden stool. He spread his hands on the table and Armaghanean Hanoum, staring him in the eye during every second, moved her slim pointed finger—it was strangely young and shapely—across his skin.

"Others come to me; but they do not believe. I tell them nothing and I send them away. But you . . . you touch the earth and men dig for the precious liquid! Always men find it where you have touched the earth. It is so, here on your hand."

In the ensuing pause while he looked into her eyes, Markam felt that he was hanging on the slenderest of cords over a great precipice, with all the world as he had seen it spread out below him, motionless and transfixed. The finger on his hand had stopped and the woman seemed to have ceased to live except for white lids that fluttered up and down, not quite opaque, never hiding her sparkling dark eyes.

The Witch of Erivan overcame her exhaustion and rose to her feet. "Come," she said, taking the arm of her visitor. As she opened the inner door and held back the curtain, Armaghanean Hanoum pressed her hand to the boards and the cavernous room beyond sprang into subdued mauve illumination. The walls

and floor were covered with carpets and tapestries. Rugs from Baluchistan, flaming and soft; hangings with thread of blue and gold from Damascus; products of the desert weavers of Persia and Afghanistan mingling their shades with little prayer rugs of Anatolia; all in the soft glow of lights that were mauve. . . .

"My couch has deep cushions."

The man reclined as he was bidden. His eyes remained locked with those of the woman. She held out a glass, filled with a heavy yellow liquor.

"Listen to me," said the Witch of Erivan. "This much you will remember. You are a wanderer on the earth and your destiny lies in a land where men measure the seasons by the light of the twinkling stars and where the green shadow of the moon at midnight is more to be desired than the sparkle of sapphires by day. Remember that you are a wanderer and that which you seek lies in the east. . . . Now drink, and perhaps you will forget what will follow."

As the man swallowed the colored contents of the glass, the woman drew away and the air overhead became charged with a perfume both misty and fragrant. In a second Markam imagined that he stood in a garden where flowers with blue petals dropped slowly through the shade of a rich afternoon, tinting the earth until they covered his feet. . . .

It was a slender girl who stood before him, robed in silken white to her ankles, with arms like ivory, smooth to the shoulders. She shook out the coils of her hair and it hung to her waist in a sooty torrent. She laughed with the sound of tinkling bells and the eyes of this girl were the eyes of the woman whom men in Constantinople called the Witch of Erivan.

Through the dropping blue petals the figure in white bent forward until the silk fell away from an ivory throat that was marked by veins of a delicate tracing. Her breath and her lips touched the lips of the man, and the blood in his heart beat wildly.

II

THREE hours later George Markam was conscious of a sustained metallic tapping sound, quite close to him. He listened to it with awakening perceptions. Click-clickety-click! Clickety-click-click!

Opening his eyes, the American observed that the lights were subdued and mauve. Clickety-click. He turned his head, then sat up.

Seated with her back to him, before a little ebony table, was the woman of his dream. A quantity of dark hair coiled loosely on her neck. She was swathed in white. As her arms moved her skin took on delicate creamy tones under the lamps.

Then Markam rubbed his eyes, for on the ebony table before her was an American typewriter; and the girl was writing with considerable speed, pausing now and then after a quick flip of her fingers which sent the carriage across for a new margin, to examine a mass of papers in her lap. At his movement she stopped and looked over her shoulder.

"Oh, it's you, is it," she said in English, with a trace of foreign accent. The young woman glanced at her wrist watch and nodded her head. "Three hours," she said. "You have slept well? *Mashallah!* But I am busy!"

She drew a deep breath, and Markam fancied he detected a look of fear in her eyes as she gazed at him.

The events of the afternoon were a blur about which he recalled something involving twinkling stars and the green shadow of the moon at midnight; and a delicious yellow liquid, a little of which he had swallowed.

"You will pardon me," he said politely, "if I seem somewhat dazed."

The young woman laughed; a delightful little laugh, and he caught the sparkle of her teeth. "It is seven o'clock," she said. "You are hungry. We have two hours and I shall explain. You will eat dinner with me, of course." Her glance had an appeal in it that was

more than the ordinary use of hospitality.

"Why, yes. Of course," repeated Markam intelligently. He sounded as if he had intended to all along.

The young woman laughed again, gathering up her papers and carrying them to a recess in the wall. "That is good. And perhaps an *apertif* . . . a little douzico, before we eat. Or would you prefer a cocktail?"

"No, I have been away from America a long time. Douzico would be excellent, thank you."

His hostess touched a button and a bell sounded in the distance. The Armenian girl whom Markam recognized as the one who had earlier collected his fifty piastres at the door, entered the apartment. Armaghanean Hanoum gave orders and the douzico, Turkish absinthe, was brought, together with two small glasses.

"You drink it plain . . . neat, as the English say . . . or with water? Ah, plain. It is the better way. Mr. Markam, I shall propose the toast and you need not drink unless you wish. I drink to the cleverness of the British army!"

Their glasses clicked.

"May I ask the reason for your toast?" inquired the American.

"Wait until we eat," said the woman. "I shall come back to you in a few moments."

Armaghanean Hanoum touched the wall and went out through a door which swung open where before had been only panels. The American was left to himself. He stood up, stretching his arms over his head. He yawned twice, but it was hardly in boredom. Yes, it was five minutes past seven. He had slept for three hours. And what an edifying dream he had had! He almost wished he had not waked up. However, he considered, it did not make much difference whether he had or had not, in this astounding apartment in which he found himself. Somewhere, within a hundred feet, possibly less, was the city of Constantinople in which he had been breathing for five months while he gave expert advice about the oil resources of Ana-

tolia and the Caucasus. All the dirt and the strange smells, the sweating cobblestones and the unspeakable poverty; within a hundred feet of him. While here . . . the panel opened again and Armaghanean Hanoum entered the room, wearing this time the simple dark blue dress of a Turkish woman with the *charshyaf* thrown back from her brow and her hair tightly coiled beneath it.

"My real business hours are in the evening—not when I am the Witch of Erivan. Therefore I wear the clothes which a Turkish lady would wear. I am not Armenian and my name is Valideh. But we have two hours before us."

Markam accepted this briefest of explanations with his customary calmness. Two hours were two hours, any way one looked at them. Useless to argue that point. But what was to happen at the end of two hours? . . . He wondered. . . .

They sat down opposite each other at the table and the American was quite sure that the food, at least, had nothing to do with the Near East. The soup was delicious.

"I like you, Mr. Markam," said Valideh unexpectedly.

There seemed to be no particular reply to this, so Markham only smiled.

"I like you," went on the lady, "because you are so entirely natural. This afternoon, for a little, you were confused. A trifle upset, is it not so? It would not be difficult to hypnotize you, I think. But that is not unusual. Many people may be hypnotized. What did Captain Pickthorn tell you about me?"

"Very little," confessed the American. "He said people called you the Witch of Erivan; that you were a kind of super-fortune-teller. That was about all. Oh, yes; and that you had bewitched one of the Whirling Dervishes so that he doesn't dance any more."

Valideh started. Then she frowned, her dark brows coming together. "He told you that," she murmured. "How these British do find out about us! But," she added after a short silence during which she did not meet his eye, "there

are many things which they do not find out. Is the Captain a great friend of yours, Mr. Markam?"

"I have no great friends. He is an acquaintance. My life here has thrown me into contact with him often and sometimes we drink together or eat at the *Cercle Muscovite*."

"You suspected nothing then," said Valideh, "when I explained about your past so accurately this afternoon?" She leaned toward him. Again Markam saw the haunted look in her eyes.

"I am only beginning to suspect."

"Perhaps one enjoys oneself by being credulous. It does not seem like you, however. Captain Pickthorn came in a few days ago. I did not enjoy his manner and I asked him to go. This afternoon he came to me again. I, myself, have nothing to do with British officers, but this afternoon the Captain evidently wanted something very much. I could tell by his manner. Mr. Markam, he bribed me. And what a generous bribe! Five Turkish pounds; about twelve shillings to him, if you please. *Mon capitaine* is evidently very wealthy!"

"I see," said Markam. "He bribed you, did he? But I admit that for the time you took me in completely. Your surroundings, where you do your witchcraft, put me in the proper . . . what would we call it? . . . receptive state. Is that too involved for you?"

"Why should it be, Mr. Markam? I went for four years to the American College for women in Constantinople. When I was a small girl I had a governess who taught me to speak English. It is my accent which makes you think that perhaps I do not understand long words."

George Markam saw that she was laughing at him. Amusement made her look prettier than ever.

"But I make fun of you," Valideh went on. "It is not polite of me, is it? Captain Pickthorn was very polite—after he gave me the five pounds, the twelve shillings he could so well afford."

"Vaudrais was only inside your house five minutes," remarked Markam. "He must have talked rapidly to you."

"It is a way of his. Yes, he spoke very fast. He told me all about you, so that I had no difficulty in telling you of your past." She paused. Her brow was furrowed. While the Captain talked, I could not help thinking that a man who had done all that you had done might be—might be able to help me—and brave. I was prepared, you see, to like you. It was not . . . mischievousness on my part to give you the drug. Many people come to see me, because of my reputation as the Witch of Erivan. I can never give to one person much time in the afternoon. My keeping you here was my own selfishness. The drug I gave you is harmless but most powerful. It brings sleep almost instantly. Can you remember about it?"

"You said something about my traveling . . . that I was a wanderer," stated the American after some consideration and several sips of wine while Valideh was engaged in carving the steak *Chateaubriand*. "That I was not to forget that I was a wanderer. Then, let me see; the green moonlight—yes, Vaudrais studied primitive religions once. I can detect his hand in all of that. I took your drug. My recollection is dim after that, but I would be willing to bet that you kissed me."

"You do not know why?" she questioned without embarrassment.

"I supposed it was because you liked the way I part my hair . . . or something equally trivial."

"Something equally trivial," she agreed, laughing. "I was hurried. The drug works instantly if it is taken when the blood is beating fast. You are always calm. When I kissed you . . . you were not so calm. It was not a very warm kiss either, but you went immediately to sleep. But there was another reason—" Again she glanced at her watch—and it was distinctly fear he saw in her eyes.

George Markam accepted a cigarette from his hostess and regarded her meditatively through the light grey smoke of Anatolian tobacco.

"Who are you, anyway," he mused. "The Captain says you are Armagha-

nian Hanoum, the Witch of Erivan, and seventy years old. He did not tell me your age, but he implied it. You say you are Valideh, and to prove it you wear the *charschaf* of a Turkish lady. For a Turk, you have splendid judgment about wine. . . . I beg your pardon. My talking to myself is an abominable habit from having lived alone so many years of my life."

"I do not mind, because I have decided to tell you about myself, Mr. Markam, I am an international episode."

After this strange declaration Valideh sat for some time in silence, letting the smoke curl upward lazily while she seemed to stare with downcast eyes at the plate before her. She made a sign to the Armenian girl who removed the dishes and brought on coffee, served in tiny china cups without handles, each resting in a gold container.

"An international episode," she repeated. "Yes, that is true of me. My mother was one of the four wives of Feridoun Hassan Pasha. She was a Circassian girl, brought to Constantinople when she was young. My mother's father was a brigand of the Georgian mountains; it must have been from him that my mother received her independent spirit. She was bored with life in the summer palace near the Sweet Waters of Asia. One day, when she was riding on the Bosphorus in a *caïque*, the boat of the Russian Embassy struck a floating log and sank. A young officer swam to my mother's *caïque* and when the servants would have killed him, my mother interfered. That in itself could have been a frightful scandal; perhaps you know how Turkish ladies were secluded in the days of Sultan Abdul Hamid?"

"To make my story very brief, my mother fell in love with this young Russian officer. How she managed to meet him I never knew because when I was born Feridoun Hassan poisoned my mother. My father was Prince Nikolai Podlesky, and he was very rich. The secret of my wealth, my apartment here,

is he. I never saw the man and perhaps he is now dead, but until the war he managed to keep informed about me through an old nurse—it was she who told me of him—and in banks in Petrograd, Berlin and London the Prince deposited money for me. Marks and roubles are not worth much nowadays, but I have a credit of twelve thousand pounds sterling in England."

"That was certainly considerate of your father," said Markam thoughtfully. "Then you are really no more Turkish than you are Armenian, in spite of your name. You are half Circassian and half Russian."

"Yes," began Valideh quickly, again her expression was haunted. "Let us sit where it is more comfortable," she said.

They moved to a divan on which George Markam had reclined for three unconscious hours earlier that day. Valideh drew up her feet, sitting cross-legged on a cluster of deep cushions so that she looked like the pistil of a flower of many colored petals. When the maid had removed the table she carried in liquors on a laquer slab and Valideh chose a bottle of Benedictine.

They sipped gravely. And then for an instant her composure vanished. She moved close to Markam, like a tired child.

"O, it was wrong of me to hold you here!" she cried suddenly. "It was wrong!"

"Why," Markam quietly asked.

She looked at him piteously

"There is danger," she said.

Something in Markam's heart was stirred by her words and by the beauty of her, poignant in the moment's intensity. Customary caution and sagacity had left him and in their place he felt a warmth of sympathy, a rash determination to see through whatever the danger was. He took her hand for a moment, calmly. His grasp instantly soothed her.

"Is it the Dervish?" he asked softly.

His beautiful companion nodded in assent.

"He is very powerful—he has many minions."

The quaint book-sound of the word "minions" somehow made Markam laugh gayly. It was so archaic, so serious, it put momentarily a comic-opera touch to coming events. The girl gave a little bewildered glance at him, and then she too laughed. The tenseness of the moment vanished in the laughter. Her eyes were still sparkling, not fearful, when he asked her:

"Do you expect him tonight?"

"I think he is coming tonight," she said. . . .

With a few more words Markam cleared the atmosphere, and soon Valideh was continuing her narrative—

"It is a long distance," she said, "from the palace of Feridoun Hassan Pasha to the Witch of Erivan who tells fortunes. But with the war, we Turkish women began to have more freedom than we had ever had before. We started wearing our faces unveiled in the streets; we stopped to talk to men we knew when we met them in Stamboul . . . in a hundred different ways we began to emerge like our western sisters.

The Pasha did not like the new spirit. He saw me one day talking to this same Dervish on the bridge over the Golden Horn. Because of that I was locked all alone in my room at the summer palace. I watched and I waited, and when my opportunity came I escaped, nor have I ever seen Feridoun Hassan since. I went to Asia Minor and it was quite easy for me. For three years I traveled, sometimes near Syria, sometimes as far north as Tiflis; sometimes I was disguised as a boy and sometimes as an old woman. Usually the latter, because I found that I could support myself as the Witch of Erivan. It was after the war and no one ever disturbed me."

Valideh broke into a laugh. She extended one foot, moving it on her dainty ankle. "I am an uplifter—I learned that word when I was at the American College in Constantinople—and I have not flat feet. My ankles are very pret-

ty." She looked down and then withdrew her foot, making, at the same time, a funny little gesture of balance. "Why am I the Witch of Erivan? As a witch I have great influence. I tell the people of the new days that are coming for Turkey. Often I do not believe it," she said with a note of sadness, "but I tell people, anyway, and I do not think it hurts them. I amuse myself by inventing fortunes which do not hurt them either. At night it is very different. It is half past eight and I usually have visitors shortly after nine o'clock.

"They are my friends, they who come at night, some young Turks and several people of the diplomatic service whom I can trust. We plan—plan wonderful things for this unhappy country of ours. Even they do not know that I was raised as a Turk. To them I am the daughter of Armaghanean Hanoum. They help me, because I write and through my friends of the diplomatic service I have been able to have several articles published about Turkish women in the journals of western Europe. Writing; that is my entertainment and my duty since I cannot travel," she concluded, giving him a glance full of a strange wistfulness.

George Markam nodded and said nothing. What a long distance he felt that he had come since half past three that afternoon when he and Vaudrais turned off crowded Step Street! He dared not further analyze his feelings. Her amazing confidence was utterly beyond him.

When he looked at Valideh, he remembered his half drained Benedictine and abruptly turned his head away again. She was, in her Turkish dress surrounded by her big colored cushions, most astonishingly tiny and beautiful. It was almost as if he, George Markam, of the solitary past, was standing at the edge of a field where the flowers were made of the thinnest glass and where he felt one single step might forever ruin something whose value could not be computed. When he

finally did speak, his voice was tinctured with this trepidation.

"Valideh, why are you afraid of this Whirling Dervish?"

The woman's dark eyes regarded him gravely.

"He is the only man in all Constantinople whom I fear." Valideh lit another cigarette and moved it nervously about with her small hand. "I hypnotized him. Really hypnotized him. I had to, because he threatened me. He wished to be my lover. To have accepted him would have been the end of me. He is wild; a fanatic. Because I was afraid that he would reveal my identity to Feridoun Hassan Pasha and end my work for my country-women, I pretended to accept him. I drugged him and hypnotized him. It is true that he sat by the Golden Horn and howled. But the hypnotism has ended, I have heard. That is my danger, and he will be here tonight."

"And what then?"

Valideh gave a little shrug, eminently expressive. "I am only half Russian, the other half of me,—the Circassian half,—will probably stab him . . . unless he stabs me first."

She shuddered. . . . "And yet," she said,—*"I cannot master my fate alone! I am brave, but—"*

George Markam was not sure that he himself had not been hypnotized by the fragile woman who smoked so daintily in little energetic puffs. There was that about her eyes, however, which made her words sincere. They were large and deep, mysterious at will, but also,—and this he felt distinctly,—candid with him, especially when she smiled.

Valideh sprang to the floor. "What is that!" she exclaimed. "So soon!"

The American at first heard nothing. His attention, indeed, was more fixed on the young woman who stood erect and taunt, as if suddenly charged with an electric current. Then dimly it came to him. A sound above; a knocking. It increased. Now there was no doubt of it; a pounding, getting more violent, more distinct. The disturbance reached

them through the ceiling and must have originated thirty or forty feet over their heads. As it continued Valideh turned quickly and seized his arm.

"Listen! You hear it now."

She had scarcely spoken when George Markam jumped and every nerve in his body turned on edge. Far over their heads rose a high, agonized scream, lifting to a crescendo peak of terror. It broke, rose up again, and ended in a horrid, throaty rattle. Steps were audible—a clumsy rataplan of heavy feet on the stairs.

"Give me something . . . anything to fight with, Valideh!"

The girl rushed to a desk, opened a drawer and thrust into the hand of the American an automatic pistol and an electric flashlight. She ran to the divan and pushed hard against a panel behind it, which opened and gave instantly on a passage through which came a damp current of air.

The lights went out; and the curtain leading to the outer room was ringed, as it billowed in the gust of wind from the passage, with the light of Markam's electric torch.

So rapidly had Valideh moved that she had given Markam the pistol, handed him the flashlight and opened the panel into the passage in hardly fifteen seconds. The footsteps were coming down the narrow stairs, much nearer now.

An instant she stood beside him in the darkness, her shoulder touching his elbow. "When you hear me call," she whispered, "put out your light and jump for the door behind the divan."

When the shriek above died away, George Markam had been trembling. Now the cold grasp of his weapon brought back an ancient habit and he held the gun loosely in his fingers, his arm at his side. . . .

The curtain, parting violently, disclosed a fantastic figure in the steady circle of light. A pair of eyes glittering in a wildly distorted face, a long black robe, a high crowned brown hat—the costume of the Mevlevi Der-

vishes. The American raised the barrel of his revolver and tightened his finger on the trigger. There was a shattering explosion. The dervish sprawled forward into the room, clutching the air, falling, twisting horribly as he crashed to the floor. A knife spun from his hand and sank blade first into the carpet, shaking. The high felt hat bounced across the floor like a megaphone tossed away by a cheerleader. His heavy leather shoes beat together; subsided.

The American was conscious of the smell of smoke and a slight cracking sound came to his ears from the stairway. One shot. There had been no time to examine his pistol, but there must be five or six left. In the outer cellar men were shouting confusedly.

It was dark. It was dark everywhere, save in the narrow shaft of light which Markam held at arm's length sideways from him. The smell of smoke was pervasive now. When the Dervishes came on again they would probably assault in a body. Four, five shots and he would be done for: killed in an underground hole by a mob of raging fanatics. In the empty second before their charge, George Markam realized as never before the great desire to live, to see the day, to snatch up Valideh in his arms and to escape.

"Come!" she cried then, in English.

The American turned and leaped. As he did so the curtain rose inward and a tremendous, sustained yell went before it.

A little hand sought Markam's wrist, drawing him backward into the current of damp air. Three steps, and the panelled door slammed behind him, cutting instantly to a quarter the pandemonium which now broke loose with unequalled fury in Valideh's apartment.

"You are not hurt?" Her hand was clutching his arm, each finger a tiny band of nervous tension. "You are not hurt?" she repeated.

"They didn't touch me."

"Then follow me. Be careful, because it is slippery."

III

At eleven o'clock the following morning there was a tap on the door of George Markam's room at the Hotel Tokatlian in the Grande Rue de Pera and Captain Vaudrais Pickthorn of His Britannic Majesty's Army waited impatiently as the American moved about in his chamber.

"What ho; what ho; what ho!" clipped out the Captain. "Awfully rushed this morning, but we can have a Scotch and soda at the bar." The Captain's bright blue eyes were reddened at the lids, he had not shaved, and his uniform, ordinarily the most immaculate, was full of wrinkles and extra creases.

"Whiskey and soda—*deux fois*—," the officer told the man of the apron and bottles. They walked to a table in the corner of the bar-room and Vaudrais slumped to the chair.

"Great heavens, man! I've just finished the weirdest night in the history of my service. I'm completely dragged out."

"What's been the trouble?" asked Markam.

"Trouble? Trouble enough and a damned sight more! Armaghanean Hanoum was murdered last night!" The bloodshot eyes of the Captain stared at his friend.

"No-o. Why that is impossible. She was perfectly well when last I saw her."

"When last you saw her; yes, no doubt. My dear fellow, when last *you* saw Armaghanean Hanoum means nothing in Constantinople." The Captain seized his glass, downing its contents at a gulp and calling for another before the Levantine barkeeper had time to get away.

"Well . . . that's all very sudden, I'm sure. What happened?"

"You are a cool one! Sit here asking me to describe a murder as if I was going to describe a cricket match. Listen . . ." he lowered his voice.

"I was in my office at Police Headquarters at about nine o'clock last night. The telephone rang and somebody was

shouting at me in a mixture of Armenian and Turkish. The woman on the wire was so excited that I couldn't catch more than every other word, but I managed to gather that some men were trying to break into the house of Armanghanian Hanoum. I was about to hang up and order a dozen men down to investigate when there came through the phone the most ghastly shriek I ever heard. It positively made my hair curl. It broke off, came on again, and all of a sudden finished in a throaty rattle.

"It was twenty minutes later when I arrived with ten soldiers. The door had been broken in and against the wall was a telephone with the receiver hanging down at the end of its cord. Below, on the floor, was the Armenian girl who collects the money from the people who come in the afternoons. She was dead, with a knife in her chest. She had been screaming when the point of that knife cut into her lungs—that was the rattle I heard."

Vaudrais paused, wiping his stubbly cheeks with a soiled handkerchief he drew from his sleeve. He sipped his second highball, watching the American with gathering irritation.

"Was that all?"

"All!" The Englishman emitted a sound which was half snort. "All the corpses we found, if that's what you mean. I started down the stairs. The place was full of smoke, and before I got to the bottom I could hear flames crackling."

"Whoever was down there was done to a turn in ten minutes. I spent half the night with the Turkish firemen before we got it out. The place is gutted, and God knows how many people were burned to a cinder."

"And that isn't the most peculiar thing. When I found the cellar on fire I ran out to send in the alarms . . . it's quiet as death day that alley at night . . . a fire could burn for an hour before it was noticed . . . when I was running out I bumped into three different attachés from three different Constantinople embassies, evidently on their way

in. I arrested them: They wouldn't tell me a thing and I had to let them go—in fact, the President of the Police gave me a terrific ragging for touching them. They wouldn't tell me a thing."

Pickthorn ended, rattling the ice in his empty glass.

"Quite an evening," agreed Markam. "Now you are busy tracking down clues, I suppose?"

"Precisely," snapped the Englishman. "Pre-cisely! And I might just as well try to swim up the Bosphorus against the current. Where the devil is there a clue between an old Armenian woman, aged seventy or thereabouts, and three young embassy attachés? Where in the name of the Lord is there a clue between that old hag and a fire that destroys the whole place? I ask you, George?"

"Don't ask me, Vaudrais. I have nothing to do with the Intelligence Service."

Pickthorn examined the American critically. "You are a queer one, George. You are so damned undemonstrative. What happened to you yesterday when you went into the cellar? Did the Witch of Erivan tell your fortune?"

"In a way, she certainly did," answered Markam dryly. He looked at his watch. "Great Scott—quarter to twelve."

"I'll see you in a few days," said Vaudrais, rising. "I expect to be deucedly busy for a while, until I clear up this business."

"You think it can be solved, after all?"

"I'm sure of it. Not much gets by the Inter Allied Police—What did you say, George?"

"Nothing. I didn't say anything. Let me know how you come out, will you, Vaudrais? Oh, by the way, here's your ten pounds."

"Forget it!" exclaimed the Captain in sudden embarrassment.

"You won it,—here, it's yours."

"A dinner with it sometime." Pickthorn accepted the notes reluctantly.

"See you in a few days, George, Cheerio!"

The English Captain strode out, scowling, rubbing with his hand the reddish whiskers that morning had brought. George Markam was certainly odd, thought Vaudrais; there was something of the mystic in him—there must be. How else to account for those everlasting, placid silences, during which the American stared ahead of him, thinking of nothing? A mystic, but without capacity for emotion—therefore a dolt. There—he had it—a neat phrase or two and Pickthorn tucked Markam away in his pigeon-hole, turning his mind to the sleuthing of his clues.

IV

THE American returned to his room. Seated on the bed, with the dark cascade of her hair over her shoulders and her little feet folded beneath her in the way that only women of the East know, was Valideh, whom men in Constantinople called the Witch of Erivan. Across her lap was one of George Markam's white shirts on which she sewed industriously with rapid stitches. She looked up as Markam entered, and smiled.

George walked to the bed and, slipping an arm behind her shoulders and the other under her knees, lifted her into the air, kissing her lips.

"Be careful of the needle, my dearest. Wait a moment; there!" Valideh thrust it in her dress, then put her arms about his neck, resting her cheek against his. "And what did *Herr Kapitan*, the great British detective, have to say this morning?"

The American grinned and sat down on the bed, holding Valideh on his knees. "He said a great deal; but I believe he'll be a busy little Tommy for some time. He thinks you were burned to a cinder—to quote the Captain."

Markam's face became grave.

"Vaudrais met three men of the diplomatic service. They haven't told him anything—yet. You think they may be trusted?"

"For a few days. They will be as anxious to know what happened to me as the Captain, though."

"By the time that they all get their theories together," said George, "you and I, Valideh, will be a great way off."

"How is that?"

"It's this way," Markam began slowly, as if picturing to himself the scenes that he would show her. He tightened his arm about her supple waist, cupping a hand over her heart. "We shall go on a long trip together. Paris, with the purple lights from the balcony of the Opera shining across the wet pavements of the Boulevard des Italiens; Venice, looking out from San Marco between the palace and the Campanile, at the little fishing boats with their red and yellow sails; Vienna, with the polished automobiles moving slowly around the Ringstrasse in the evening and music playing in the park. . . . And I shall take you to New York, where people hurry for they don't know what. You are quite sure you want to come with me?"

"Quite sure, my darling."

"Then," cried Markam, with his face alight and his voice vibrant with a power which she alone had made him feel, "you and I will go to our consulate this afternoon to have my passport changed."

"The consulate—again. How frightened I was there last night!"

Valideh turned her dark eyes to look at the man whom Fate, wandering through the mazes of the strangest city in the world, had brought into her life; Fate, very much disguised, as a British Captain filled with curiosity.

"It was a funny little wedding, wasn't it? Not the way I dreamed—but better!"

Valideh's lashes brushed her cheeks and she saw Markam as he had stood before her table in the cellar; as he had started when first she kissed him; as he sat smoking her cigarettes while she told him her story; and finally, she saw him again before the rush of the Whirling Dervish, a silhouette against the circle of light from the electric torch. That was the picture she would carry always.

Moggs

By Alexander Hull

I

I HADN'T heard his footsteps in nine years, and yet I knew them for Moggs'. I don't pretend to explain that; they were regular, shuffling, a bit diffident—thousands of men must walk like that. Yet, as soon as I heard them coming along the bare-floored corridor (my door was, and oughtn't to have been, slightly ajar) I said, with a certain conviction, "Moggs." And added, "Lord, save me!"

I didn't want to see him. The senseless thing was, after all, too fresh in my mind. Besides, I never did expect to regard it with that sort of detached, cynical, half-humorous attitude which I had cultivated at no inconsiderable cost against the untoward events of life. One suffers terribly, I've found, until one erects a barrier. But life has a way with her, nevertheless, that is subtle and strong; she pierces through the chinks with a rapier thrust, or by main force she batters down your wall and eventually we all take tithe of her violence. In Gregory's death she had made her breach in my defences. I can talk of it now, but there was a period when I couldn't have, when—well, if Moggs had come to me then . . . I don't know. Perhaps I should merely have managed not to see him.

The affair was such a finely-woven mesh of ironies that I almost despair of making you see it.

It was only after Moggs came that I myself realized the full extent of that ironical web. But from the first, when my philosophy, my habits, what you will, had somewhat mastered my overpowering grief at the loss of Gregory,

I did see what a fine blow life had delivered me; that a brilliant fellow like Gregory, vigorous as well as clever, with a pen of gold—ay, and it was gold, too! And it had caught on. He was a made man—that such a fellow, no less admirable personally than in his achievements—I tell you there never was such another fellow in the world—that Gregory should die for a flabby, incompetent nonentity like Moggs (Alfred Moggs. The very name of him— isn't that enough?)—well, it was fitting! And when I've said that you have my indictment of life.

Moggs. It had been Gregory that had found him, too. I myself had not seen the man since we were all together in the college dormitory, and that was nine years ago.

Gregory's rooms were next mine. He came in one morning, confidently, as he always did, saying:

"By Jove, Barbour, you'll never guess whom I saw last night!"

There was an unexpectedness about Gregory. He was as likely to have seen a sultan in full regalia as not, and I admitted I never would.

"Moggs!" said Gregory, warming his hands before my fireplace quite as if there had been a fire in it, and speaking with great gusto. "And where. You'd never guess that, either?"

"No." I remembered Moggs. He had been fat and incompetent even in his college days. And I recalled him as something of a bounder. "Fresh Moggs," some of them had called him. I wasn't interested in him, and I said so.

"No?" replied Gregory, unmoved.

"But you are! Now, let me demonstrate to you—"

"Why should I bore myself with Moggs, whom I'm perfectly content to have nearly forgotten?"

"You shouldn't," grinned my friend. "I will save you the trouble. I will bore you with him. Moggs. I want to talk about him. I'm going to talk about him—in this room. In this room! You say you are going out somewhere?"

"You know very well there's no place to go at this hour."

"No? Very well, then. You'll be bored with Moggs. And first, I'll tell you I'm giving you a darned fine theme for an essay in him. And Moggs is interesting. He's important; he's vital. You know it's only in little glimpses like this that we get any inkling of the real meaning of life."

"Oh, you've got one?" I inquired, heavily sarcastic.

"Well—well, *anyway*," said Gregory amiably, "he's interesting. Consider him, not as Moggs alone, but as a problem. Back in college we had the problem given us. Moggs, his character, his appetites, the world. And what's the sum? Where ought I reasonably to have found him?"

"Now, I'll tell you," I retorted. "Considering—er—everything, why, I think you might have found him in a pulpit."

Gregory looked grieved. He had a strong, inexplicable streak of the religious in him, and he was always annoyed if he suspected anyone of playing upon it.

"See here, now," he said. "Be sensible. Let's talk Moggs—sensibly."

"Very well. I don't know his sum."

"He's playing piano for a movie house. Way over cross-town. Fledder Street, I think. I'm not sure. Only I can find it."

"The main point, in my way of thinking, is, can *he* find *this* diggings?"

"Hang it, I didn't ask him over," said Gregory.

"You will, though," I assured him. "And he'll come."

"Well, let him!" said Gregory defiantly. "He can't corrupt either of us." Then, after a moment, "You darned snob, you! No wonder you write *essays*! Well, I was looking over that part of town—"

Gregory was always snooping about in odd corners.

"And I got tired. It's not a very nice part. Slummy in spots. Not exactly slummy in others, but maybe worse. And the slummy streets are very noisy and crowded, and the others aren't noisy at all, and they don't seem to be crowded. Not to the outward eye, at least. Well, I had walked myself tired, but I wanted to go a bit further, nevertheless. I dropped into a show to rest. It was crowded and I went up front. And there was Moggs! I *was* surprised. He really was handling the ivories very nicely, too—considering the time and the place."

"But I wasn't joking about the pulpit, quite. You know, he told me once in college that he intended to preach," I interposed.

"You're not lying? Well, then, I forgive you! But he didn't preach, you see. And another thing. You used to consider him fresh. Well, he's not that any more. Life has taken it out of him, I suppose. He seemed to me rather natural, simple, pathetic. And he's fat now. Really fat. It was warm in there, too. He'd start a 'rag' with a great flourish, and sag in the middle, and 'hit 'er up' again toward the finish, you know. And then he'd mop his forehead and jowls to get ready for the next—they *were* jowls, Barbour. Tell me, why the deuce did that fellow bother to go to college? What do you suppose he *got* out of it?"

I shook my head.

"Well, anyway, I didn't ask you because I thought you knew," said Gregory pleasantly. "But I had figured he'd at least be a clerk or a book-keeper."

"Probably he makes more this way."

"By Jove, that's so!" cried Gregory. "Of course he does! Well, I waited until the thing was over, and waylaid

him. I think he was glad to see me—in spite of things.”

“What things?”

“Well, Fledder Street, for one thing. His clothes. His particularly galling condition of servitude. The damaging appearance of things in general.”

“Yet you called *me* a snob.”

“I am thinking now from Moggs’ standpoint,” said Gregory. And he told me the rest.

Moggs, it seemed, *had* been glad to see him. At any rate, he had not been reticent, and I think the lack of reticence is a fairly sure sign. He had done a number of things, experimentally, which I don’t remember, and had drifted in the end to the keyboard. One thing I do recall—that he had married. There had been two children, but both, as Gissing has said, were happily buried. The union blessed by them, however, hadn’t gone on quite so happily. Moggs’ wife had left him a few weeks previous to his meeting with Gregory, and Gregory said that he thought Moggs “had rather felt that.” Apparently he hadn’t talked of that episode so fully, nor so placidly as of the rest.

And that, for a while, was the end of Moggs. It was almost precisely a month later that Gregory lost his life, a life that was rounded, brilliant, full of significance, saving Moggs. And the first terrible irony visibly connected with the fatality was that everyone believed that Moggs had nearly lost his life while trying to save Gregory, the well-known novelist. The papers had it that way. But I had a note by messenger from Moggs the first day telling me briefly that Gregory had been trying to save *him*, and that the newspaper account was all wrong, although he doubted if it were worth our while to attempt to correct it. He added that he would call later and explain things in detail. It was better, he submitted, for both our sakes, to wait a little.

It was an excellently written note. I don’t know quite how Moggs achieved it. Still, he was not altogether stu-

pid. Only—but I can never hope to explain a Moggs. He did not appear at the funeral.

I didn’t want to see him. Gregory’s heroism, Moggs’ gift to me, his dearest and most intimate friend, made no particular impression upon me. I had taken that quality of courage, by mere chance unevidenced by any specific act, for granted. Nothing could have raised greatly my opinion of Gregory; his heroism, then, was immaterial. And it was several weeks before I was able to bear, without visibly wincing, the thought that it was for Moggs that he had died, that so brilliant a candle had been snuffed for the darkness of Moggs.

I never had cared for the man; I hated him now. And yet, his skillful note intrigued me into seeing him. That was but natural. If there was more to hear, I—I *must* hear it! So I wrote him at length that I could see him. There was no reply, and for some undivined reason he had given me more than a week’s respite. But these were his footsteps. I hadn’t heard them since *they* had trod the hallway of the college dormitory, but I knew them.

II

I LET him in. He was what Gregory had told me. He was not particularly neat. And he was nervous. For that matter, I was myself. He put his hat on the table—upon a book that Gregory had given me. For a little I watched that hat, fighting my irresistible impulse to move it. Then, realizing that I should lose the fight in the end, I stepped to the table and put the thing—one of those low-built, stiff, terrible affairs that are used by vulgar imitation Jewish comedians in vaudeville—at the other end. And wiped the book with my handkerchief. God knows why! But, as I say, I was not myself.

His eyes followed my movements without special interest. Evidently it never occurred to him that they needed

motivation. He was preoccupied, I presume, with his own emotions. "I don't suppose you wanted much to see me," he remarked at length.

I saw no reason for lying, so I told him "No." But, of course, if he had something to tell—

"Sit down," I added.

He sank into an easy chair by his hat and mopped the beads of perspiration from his brow. Along it horizontally there was an indented line, pressed deep into the superabundant flesh by the rim of the atrocious hat. He murmured apologetically that he had walked fast. I myself was cold. But, then, I had not been walking.

"I thought you might not. That was one reason I waited coming to see you. I understood a little how things were between you, you see. He"—throughout he never mentioned Gregory by name, but only by a vocally italicized pronoun—"told me you lived next, and what friends you were. I thought you might feel inclined at first to—to blame me. It wouldn't have been exactly reasonable. I wasn't honestly to blame—but, then, we don't do these things by reason, do we?"

As he seemed waiting and wanting an answer, I said grimly, "We don't."

"And I thought," he resumed, "that if I gave you a little time you might see that. For a little I had a notion of saying nothing, and then it struck me that, being such great friends, you *ought* to know. It wouldn't be right you shouldn't know. You—you've written books, too, haven't you? I thought so. But I seem to have rather lost track of most of the fellows since I left college. Well, then, you'll understand what I mean when I say that, knowing so much of him as you did, knowing everything about him, we'll say, it was only just that you should have the—the last chapter, too, as you might say. Poetical justice they call it, ain't it?"

Remarkable detestable creature! The "ain't" crushed me quite. At college we hadn't said "ain't"—not even Moggs. It was the mark of his movie-

dom. I could not trust myself to say anything for the moment, so I merely nodded in reply to his ridiculous question.

He sighed, and with a gasp completed successfully the struggle to regain his breath after hurrying, a struggle he had been carrying on ever since he entered the room.

"I said I wasn't honestly to blame, and yet in a way I was, too. I had been planning something wicked. And it may be upon that . . . I can't get over it that he died trying to save me. I felt at first that maybe it would have been better if it had been the other way. But after a while I came to see that it hadn't been God's will that it should be the other way; that He had been saving me, perhaps, for something special—something big, I hope."

The supreme egotism of it! So God was saving Moggs for something? And Moggs was turning pious again. Soon, no doubt, the insufferable creature would be knee-deep in the Almighty's counsel, would hear His call. With a wonderful constraint I said nothing.

"That would be poetical justice, too, and real as well—that I should do some work that he might have done if he lived. And so I've felt that my life wasn't given back to me for nothing."

His life! And what was that to me? I was almost beside myself. In another moment, I swear, I should have got rid of him—violently. But, staying the very act, he launched into his story.

"You'll understand me better in a moment. I expect I'd better go into it from the beginning. It was all an accident that I saw him at the lake. It was what I call inscrutable." He almost rolled the good word in his mouth. "Inscrutable. He didn't know I was going to the beach, and I didn't know he intended going. In fact, I didn't plan on going. I decided on the spur of the moment.

"I don't know what he told you about me. Did you ever think, isn't it strange how different and apparently unconnected things all link together and end in some way we don't and can't foresee?"

It's just that, you know, that makes me a believer."

He, too, it seems, was busy with his interpretations of life!

"This began way back. I don't suppose I or anyone knows the real beginning. It may even have been predestined. Louise—that's my wife—and I never hit it off very well after the children died. I don't know why, exactly. I tried. I did all that I could, but it didn't seem to make much impression. She's nervous and high-strung, I guess. Anyway, she never was the same after Nannie, the second child, died. She couldn't stand the empty flat, I think was one thing. I always thought so. So I tried to get her to move. But she wouldn't. It seemed to me like she added that—my wanting her to move—to the score she already had against me, and altogether it seemed to turn her dead away from me. And she burst out one day over something—I don't remember what it was. . . . Well, that's not quite true, either. I do. I had just said, joking, that I'd gained three pounds more, when, all of a sudden, she jumped up from the table, her eyes blazing, and cried out that she hated me! Then she ran off and locked herself in her room. I knew, of course, it was just nerves. I—"

At any other cost, at any other time, the man's story would have won me to him. What wouldn't poor Gregory have given for this "stuff," I thought bitterly. Now—but there was no use in interfering with him. The risk of losing something if I disturbed him was too great.

"Well, nothing I could do or say seemed to affect her. She came out that night, pale and—well, hard, you might call it, and said she would never live with me again, that she was going home to her mother's, and that I mustn't ever try to see her again—not unless I wanted her to go crazy. And you know for a minute it struck me, what if she *was* crazy—just a little bit? I don't know what I said at first, but I remember saying finally that I didn't

want to keep the flat, but I'd get a room or two for a while, and asking her what I should do with the furniture.

"She looked at me with a faraway look for a minute, as if she hadn't understood me. Then she said: 'Furniture? Furniture! My God! Burn it—for all I care!'

"She turned away and went into the bedroom again. After a bit I heard her laughing—peal after peal of wild laughter. I—it scared me. But I couldn't do anything. Her door was locked. She wouldn't let me in."

He paused a moment and sucked in his breath through pursed lips. Then he said:

"I hope you'll forgive me telling you all this. I wouldn't do it, only I want you to see that I wasn't altogether to blame—to see that I had been having my troubles, and maybe wasn't quite responsible for—for what happened.

"Well, after Louise was gone it wasn't easy, you know. Not easy. If I'd been a big, ruthless, successful man, of course, it would have been different. I'd have told myself there were as good fish in the sea as had ever been caught, or I'd have plunged deeper into business, and I'd never have cared. Or if I'd been another kind I might have taken to running after girls in the street. There's plenty of them around Fledder Street and the theater. But I wasn't that kind, either, you see. I—I was pretty fond of Louise. I couldn't forget her."

His ponderous face twisted. Even I felt a twinge of genuine emotion; and I didn't want to, of course.

"I—can't—yet. Well, that doesn't interest you. But I'd get to brooding about her. I didn't drink. I never had. And I guess it hit me harder on that account. Louise lost—both the children dead. Try it yourself—if you think it's easy! That day I thought maybe the park would cheer me up. It didn't. I might have known that, I suppose. I'm a good swimmer. I thought I'd go into the water for a while. I'd just got into my suit when I saw—him. He said he thought he'd

go in, too—later. I didn't wait for him.

"There weren't many in. I swam out a considerable ways. Farther than most of them go. I didn't pay much attention to things. I—as I said, I wasn't exactly normal. I hadn't slept for three weeks—except when I took a powder. And then my heart got to acting queer, and the doctor had told me that morning I'd got to cut out the powders. Well, I got out quite a long ways, and turned back and got part way in, and it was then that he thought I was drowning, and started out after me."

"Thought you were drowning?"

His round, wide eyes gave me back stare for stare.

"I think so," he said at length. "In fact, I'm perfectly sure of it. I'm afraid he never was a very good swimmer, was he? The wind had rolled up some pretty big waves. I noticed them myself. They must have been too much for him. Or maybe he got a cramp. And when I saw he was in distress I made for him as fast as I could, naturally. There was a minute when I thought I was going to make it—but I didn't. He was gone. By that time a good many people had seen us from shore, and they all got the idea that I was saving him. Of course, I was trying to. But in the beginning he had come out after me. I know that."

"You know it?"

"Yes."

And aggravatingly he paused there. Strange that he was different now after so many utter revelations! He hung back, loath to speak of it, I could see. It was partly that that made me believe him unquestioningly and immediately when, after a little silence, he did speak.

"You see, I had got part way in. I—I don't know how it was, but all of a sudden it flashed over me, what was the use of going in. I wasn't going in to anything. Not anything that mattered. Not anything but the piano in the Bijou. They had been repairing the theater that day. That was how I happened to be off duty.

"I never had anything take hold of me quite like that before. There had

been the powders, of course. Now and then I'd thought of taking enough of them. Only I always knew I never really meant to do it. I suppose lots of folks get those ideas at times—even the most sensible.

"But this was different. I *knew*, somehow, that this time I would do it. I knew it so well that I—well, I let out my breath and stopped moving. My head went under. Then I came to the top again."

Again he was silent. Then he resumed

"You see, I thought farther out would be better.

"He must have seen me then and thought I was drowning. It was just as my head came up that I heard him shout at me. 'Keep up! Coming!' I thought he said. At first I didn't realize his intention. I was thinking, of course, more of myself. Then I saw that I'd have to wait until he had got enough and gone in again. It upset me for a minute. I swam about a bit. The waves—I suppose he couldn't see me very well. And he must have been excited, too. But I caught a glimpse of *him* now and then, and pretty soon—I saw he wasn't going to make it.

"I started for him then on the rush, half out of the water, but what with the waves and tiring myself with the pace, I didn't—quite—make it."

A web of irony, indeed! Glassy-eyed, I stared at Moggs, fascinated, horrified, tongue-tied. Gregory, dear, brilliant old Gregory had died trying to save a suicide!

Moggs had played his devil's part—shabby, innocent devil he was, though, and played it only too well. If I could have forced myself to speak I would have asked him, his work being done, why he didn't go and finish the wretched story completely. There was still the beach. It was utterly against reason he should be interrupted a second time. But I found that I couldn't say a word, for I recalled then that Moggs no longer considered that the fitting end for the affair, but now believed himself to have been saved to write a new and more

glorious ending. And I have no doubt I looked ghastly.

"You take it hard," said Moggs. "I was afraid you might. It *was* inscrutable, I know. You think, by all odds, I should have been the one to go, and he should have stayed. I don't understand it myself. I wanted to go. I felt old, tired, a failure. And he, I understand, was right at the climax of his career.

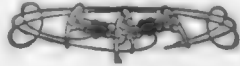
"I've been inquiring about him. I—I've even read two or three of his books. And yet he died for me. That was what made me see it, see that I'd really been wicked, that I'd been viewing things through distorted lenses, as you might say. And if God would do that for me, I thought—well, He must have some *use* for me. And from the moment I saw that I knew that I never could try to anticipate Him and His plans again, no matter what happened."

I stood there, motionless and silent, seemingly suspended paralyzed in space.

"And only yesterday," he said suppressing the light from his face quite perceptibly for my sake, "I had a note from Louise's mother. She thinks maybe in the course of a little while Louise may be willing to see me again. I guess she has quieted down some. The change has been beneficial for her."

Who was I to blame him for being centered entirely in his own little universe? After all, what could Gregory have been to him? And what could I matter? That was life—futile business fighting against it.

But I could not speak. I think he saw after a little while that I never could have spoken to him again if he had sat there a thousand years and a day, for he rose without another word, took up his atrocious little bowler hat, and shuffled out of my door and down the corridor, leaving me suspended in my silence. I never saw him afterward.



I am the Sea

By Mary Carolyn Davies

YOU are the sea-gull,
I am the sea
Waiting until
You fall to me
Drooping-winged,
Wearily.

I rest you and strengthen you
And you fly
Eager, passionate.
To the sky.
He never rests you
Only I.

Waiting you ever
I am the sea.
I never have you
Only he.



The Ad Section

By Nunnally Johnson

I

IT was on January 23, 1923, between 7:15 and 7:25 o'clock in the evening that he met the man—Rogers, so he recalled the name—and, God, under what circumstances!

The very thought of it a few minutes later as he dressed with angry haste maddened him. Never, he swore, tugging savagely at his necktie, would he enter a Turkish bath again; never would he join a gymnasium class or go in swimming or do anything that necessitated the exposure of his unclad person to the critical gaze of strange eyes. Once, he reflected grimly, was enough.

Meeting Wardner there alone he could have stood easily: Wardner himself was no lily for grace or rose for beauty. Gazing at each other in the naked state which a Turkish bath demands, his own laughter could be as legitimate as Wardner's. What he cursed was the exasperating chance that had led Wardner to introduce him to such a man as Rogers in such a place and under such circumstances. He flushed with helpless fury at the picture of which he had been such an ignoble feature . . . naked they had stood there: Rogers a man of pleasant, healthy lines, well muscled and well proportioned, and of an admirable figure; and he . . .

He ground his teeth, seething at the thought. The keen, searching look which Rogers had given him, taking him in from head to foot, noted, he was sure, every single point where he diverged even in the slightest from what a well-conditioned man of forty-five

should be. His picture was, without a doubt, planted indelibly in the man's mind, with all its imperfections, in all its naked grotesqueness. What a picture, he thought, to be carried away!

The fury subsided in the course of the evening, but a keen annoyance remained. He wondered at it, later, in his rooms. He was not vain, though to be sure he found some satisfaction in the consciousness that, fully clothed, he was a figure of some dignity. Why, then, if he were not vain, should he be so thoroughly upset at the exposure of himself under unprepossessing auspices? He conjectured, sitting with a magazine open on his knee waiting for attention, whether it was the result of Rogers's disconcerting inspection or of the sudden realization of his own deficiencies. He decided, with some reservations, that it was the stare.

On the impulse of a moment he decided to get into his pajamas to read, mainly because an unprecedented curiosity about his body had seized him. He wished to study it in the pier glass. And, presently, he wished he had done no such thing: the sight was depressing. He regarded the reflection moodily, seeing apparently for the first time how vastly different he was from perfection. For minutes he looked at it, and his melancholy deepened. It sank to bitterness and he found himself cataloguing his frailties with undue cruelty.

In truth he was a miserable specimen. Tears threatened as he marked his outline: gross, badly curved, bulbous. His belly protruded like a watermelon, lumpish and wrinkled. His shoulders

drooped, as those of an over-heavy man usually do. He blushed, embarrassed, at his legs; in addition to being rather absurdly chubby they were unmistakably warped. Standing as naturally as his self-consciousness would permit, he found that when the insides of his knees touched, his heels were still a good four inches apart. And, he reflected, they were far too hairy for any tasteful standard.

Hair, he ruminated, was a particularly general defect in his case. Where he did not want it, on his shins, on his forearms and the back of his hands, it flourished abundantly. Where he did want it, on his head, it was a thin, disappearing crop. On his hands and arms it was a healthy black. On his head what little was left was rapidly graying. A sad and infuriating state it was.

Rogers, he recalled, had rested his look especially on his feet, and, glancing down at them, he could scarcely blame him. Neither for use nor for exhibition purposes were they even adequate. They were quite obviously suffering from fallen arches, a fact brought to his mind every time he walked farther than a few blocks. And bunions and corns swelled his toes and heels into rosy red knobs, glistening with a brilliant if pitiful polish. Viewed generally, they were actually quite comical, but comedy was not the effect he wanted, and no appreciative smile rewarded their undeniable clownishness.

These sights, even if he had gone no further, would have justified his depression; but he did not stop. His eyes ranged over and over the reflection, noting everything. His nose, broad and somewhat flattened at the base, struck him for the first time, in this inexorable mood, as inexcusable. There were two heroic moles on his face, one under the corner of his jaw and one below the left eye. Hair, he noted bitterly, was on them, too. His freckles, though, below his ears, were bald and conspicuous. . . . Wearily, sadly, he put on his pajamas, unwilling to go further in the inspection.

He sank into his chair, feeling very old and tired and spiritless. And at forty-five! He was in as poor condition fundamentally, he suspected, as he was superficially. He closed his eyes.

Annoyance at Rogers and his critical inspection passed. There remained this despondency, this presenile lassitude, this utter dejection, this poignant realization of incompleteness. But at least, he reflected with a slight lifting of heart, he was not subject to fits and he did not have a goitre.

II

WHEN he opened his eyes again, perhaps an hour later, it was to have his glance fall on the magazine, laid carelessly on the table. It was spread open to one of the advertisement pages in the back, and, as if to mock him, stretched the length of a column, was a nearly nude man of proportions so perfect as to be beyond belief. "Runts!" said the caption above him, "Attention!" Indifferently curious, Sims picked it up.

It was that one move, that simple act of picking up a magazine, that indifferent curiosity, as he would tell you today, that metamorphosed Sims. It was that unthinking interest that brought to him a view of another being, another life. It opened a vista of which he had never even dreamed. Idly he stepped into another incarnation. He entered, stated briefly, the world of science.

"Runts! Attention!"

He turned the pages, carelessly at first and then, as the phenomenon began to dawn on his consciousness, rapidly. His eyes skimmed the columns avidly, the larger letters burned themselves in his mind, the illustrations flamed in his head. Gold! Diamonds! In this mood what he found was far more of a treasure. He reached the end of the advertising section and then he turned back to the page of the Apollo, lighted a cigarette with trembling fingers, and then settled himself to consider his discovery closely and in detail.

His hands caressed the magazine—a monthly of enormous circulation. He

turned the pages gently, lest he tear them. His lips formed a prayer for blessings on the publisher. It was nearly midnight before he had finished his study of it and had listed all of the addresses he wanted, but it was time spent to far more important point than any like period he could remember in his life.

What wonders! A veteran of the World War, "commissioned in the Development Battalion of the Medical Department of the U. S. Army," spoke through these columns: "I helped correct thousands of cases of flat feet without the use of any mechanical device whatever. A scientific study of the glands of the body aided me. What the Army taught me about flat feet is free to you for the asking. There is no excuse now for anybody to suffer from foot trouble." Sims jotted down the address, in Sealsburg, Ala.

Bunions! A line drawing of a foot, an angular, knobby foot, with rays of light radiating from each prominence. "Kill-o-Buns will do it! New way! Pain immediately vanishes! Acts like Magic! Hump immediately disappears! Thousands are using it! Get in with the crowd!" Vaguely excited by the ecstatic nature of the exclamations, Sims feverishly added the name of the LaSalle Laboratories, P. O. Box 32, Wisteria, Ark., to that of the Sealsburg, Ala., warrior who cured flat feet by glandular treatment during the World War.

His eyes now touched everything, marveling at discoveries he had not believed possible. . . . "Bust Pads Will Not Do—No man loves a dummy. There is no appeal in false physical make-up. You must be a REAL woman. Science comes to your rescue with a new invention which will enlarge the bust of any woman. You can now be happy and sought after and loved . . ."

But if, on the other hand, this be not necessary or advisable: "REDUCE YOUR BUST FOR TEN CENTS!" This, Sims found, could be done "with ease quickly and safely." He caught his breath, awe-struck. In fancy he

thought of a woman armed with a jar of "Prettibust" and a tube of "Reduce-O"—what disconcerting marvels she could accomplish; what bizarre effects might be gained; what . . . But in this he was not personally interested. He passed on.

Physiological triumph after physiological triumph flashed across his mind. . . . "My goitre disappeared one morning after using your treatment. Thanks and may God's blessings be on you." . . . "Mr. H. Harrison, of 423 18th Street, Manerville, N. J., has a simple treatment for the relief of Fits which Mrs. Anna Cook of Milwaukee, Wis., used and cured Fits which had been going on for fifteen years." . . . "Tumors weighing thirty pounds dissolved within a year." . . . "Pimple-Gone chases pimples in five days, or your ten cent's back." . . . "Snuff habit cured in a week." . . . "Be a MAN." . . . "Diabetes CAN be cured." . . . "Get your pep back in two days." . . . "Get your vim back in 20 minutes." . . . "How to Heal Sore Legs." . . . "Mrs. Vera Dawn says, 'I cured myself of the Morphine habit in two days.'" . . . "Barton faced an unpleasant task that morning. As office manager he felt compelled to speak to a clerk, a particularly promising clerk, on a subject avoided wherever possible. It was the only thing that stood between the young man and success. . . . Almost immediately the results showed. Within twenty days this clerk's orders doubled—then quadrupled! That is the terrible thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath). . . ."

Sims, as absorbed as he was in these statements, was not so enthralled that he did not bear topmost in mind his own particular requirements. "For thirty cents you can lose thirty pounds in thirty days." So claimed Dr. Merrill Van der Poole, M.D., of the Congressional Clinic, P. O. Box 146, Merriweather, Miss. "Reduce fast or slowly," announced the Proper Eating Society, P. O. Box 145, Roundsboro, Ga. "I reduced my waistline 22 inches," John Topping, of 674 Tomp-

kins Road, Brooklyn, N. Y., wrote to the Society for Corrective Diet, P. O. Box 874, St. Louis, Mo. "One person out of every five in the United States uses Chase-Fat—It is easy to have the slim, trim figure dictated by fashion and admired by one and all," announced the New York Laboratories, P. O. Box 132, Sioux Falls, Tex. There were a dozen other similar advertisements, showing Sims that he could reduce in spots, in sections, or as a whole, by the pound or the pennyweight, in two hours or thirty days, by salves, belts, pills, tablets, creams, girdles, exercise, diets, baths, or a machine apparently weighing a short ton and no more difficult to operate than a Hoe tri-plex press.

His two moles—they were doomed under the announcement of Dr. Phillip Jefferies, M.D., of P. O. Box 16, Fan Heights, Mich., that sixteen years of invariably successful treatments had convinced him that he could "dry up any mole, also Big Growths." P. T. Warner, of Medford, Ohio, promised to take care of the pimples, blackheads, and acne eruptions. The Rid-o-Freckles Company he assigned to "get rid of those ugly spots—freckles." He saw with pleasure that Dr. Carroll Lone, M.D., specialist, P. O. Box 165, Tremont, Nev., had patented a device which "will correct bow legs or knock knees, safely, quickly, and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort."

His nose was to be adjusted just as readily. To be on the safe side he wrote to both Dr. Harold Fairservice, M.D., inventor and patentee, P. O. Box 162, Hillsboro, Ala., and to the Annette Company, of Tewksboro, S. C., both of which advertisers claimed to possess devices which had yet to find a nose they could not alter in any shape, form, or fashion. He wrote to Doctor Fairservice for his free booklet, "Happy Days Ahead," and to the Annette Company for their 10-day trial offer.

It was as simple a matter to read: "World Goes Wild Over DePillo, a new scientific discovery which removes the endocrine glands." This was illus-

trated, as were several others, by drawings of ladies wearing evening gowns complacently or ladies in negligee gazing disconsolately at their upraised arms or ladies with flourishing moustachios, but Sims felt that fundamentally the remedies should be as effective on his arms, calves, and hands as on ladies' upper lips. It would be quite easy, he saw quickly, to accomplish this in any of several ways—by powder, by creams, by machine, and by a magic stone with supernatural properties. Furthermore, through the experiments of Dr. Alexander J. Harrington, internationally known scientist, P. O. Box 169, New York City, a glandular treatment by which hair could be grown on a bald head had been discovered. Instead of removing the endocrine glands, Dr. Harrington renovated them—a discovery so simple that the only astonishment was that it had not been made years before. As a final touch for his hair troubles Sims found that Doris Flanagan "personally invites every gray-haired person in the United States to write for my Free Trial Package." He accepted Miss Flanagan's gracious invitation.

In the end, with a sharp remembrance of the enervating lassitude which was beginning to creep over him of evenings, he jotted down the addresses listed in advertisements headed variously as follows: "Would You Like to Increase Your Vigor in 24 Hours?" . . . "Grateful Patients Thank Famous Arkansas Gland Surgeon." . . . "When Marriage Means Misery." . . . "Are YOU Old at 40?" . . . "The African Tree Treatment." . . . "Do You Know What Ponce de Leon Sought?"

It was nearly 3 o'clock in the morning before Sims had finished the last of his letters, but when he finally fell into bed, tired though he was, he was happy. Before turning out the light he had taken another glance at himself in the mirror, and his manner toward the reflection which a few hours before had so disturbed him was distinctly contemptuous. He even laughed out loud, fearlessly.

III

It was August, at Long Beach, and Sims, snatching the day off from his business trip east to New York, was enjoying it to the fullest. He was in his bathing suit, but he had not gone in the water, preferring, it seemed, to dash up and down the white stretch of beach, leaping over the sprawled luncheon parties, diving nimbly over children playing in the sand. His face beamed with life and happiness and he revelled in the warm sun bath. A little barely suppressed moan of exultation rose to his lips at the sight of every pretty girl that passed. He sucked eagerly on a Vigo-Glando tablet.

He was scarcely conscious that he should be lonely, knowing not a soul on the beach, until he discovered that he *did* know someone. He was headed for the boardwalk when he spied him. There was no mistaking the intense face, the sharp eyes. It was Rogers.

Something like triumph welled up in Sims's heart. He was surprised to find how the memory of that meeting six months ago rankled in his breast. But now, he felt, now was the time to exhibit himself. He glanced down slyly at his slender waist, at his straight white legs, his slender, perfectly formed feet, and he smiled to himself, satisfied. He directed his steps toward where Rogers was shaking hands with a man who had just come up. He halted a minute, not wishing to interrupt, and heard the conversation.

"Why, certainly I remember you," Rogers was saying heartily to the man. "You are Francis T. Kelly, of Roanoke, Va. How is Mrs. Kelly and your daughter Evangeline? I met you all, you know, at the Ferris Hotel in Richmond."

The man did not answer. His eyes were filled with awe as he studied

Rogers's face. Then he released his hand, shook his head confusedly, and went away, muttering to himself. Sims straightened his shoulders, put another tablet in his mouth, and stepped up.

"Hello, Rogers," he said, extending his hand. "Remember me?"

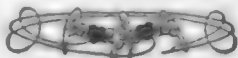
"Why, certainly I remember—" His voice broke off. "Why," he began again, "you are—" He stopped.

"Why, I'm Jefferson Sims of Denver," Sims said. "Surely you remember me. Wardner introduced us in a Turkish bath, don't you remember?"

Rogers looked him over carefully, while Sims stood smiling, exulting in anticipation of the moment when Rogers should exclaim at the change in him. But Rogers did not exclaim. He began shaking his head slowly. His eyes finally rested coldly on Sims's.

"Young man," he said, "you have tackled the wrong person. I am not to be taken in by your ruse, whatever its purpose. I know Mr. Jefferson Sims of Denver very well, too well to be mistaken. I met him, it is true, in a Turkish bath, and George T. Wardner, of 1345 Cedar Street, Seattle, did introduce us. It was on January 23 between 7.15 and 7.25 o'clock in the evening. In some way you have learned of this, but it will do you no good. I am not deceived. You look nothing at all like Mr. Sims. So you had better go, now, before I call the police. Good-bye!"

He strode off down the beach, bowing left and right to people he remembered. For a minute Sims stood, dazed, trying to grasp the meaning of Rogers's words. Then he put *two* Vigo-Glando tablets in his mouth, and, leaping and shouting and casting his arms about, disappeared down the strand, as good a man at forty-five as he had been at thirty.



The Hero

By Katherine Knox

THE train was just like any other train from New York to the commuting suburb in the early evening. Men and a few women came down the aisle; the seats began to fill rapidly, and newspapers were spread as their owners settled themselves for the accustomed boring trip home to supper.

A man entered the doorway of the car, looked up and down, turned to the next car, and disappeared.

"Boo-awr!" sounded from outside, and the train started slowly.

The man came back from the other car, teetering a little as he crossed the platform.

He looked up and down again for a seat, found none, and then smiled with a little "Thank you" as a blonde young man offered him half of the end three-quarter seat.

Although the man who had just come in was rather small, the two were crowded sitting there together. The little man sat forward, his hands on his knees. He was visibly nervous: he tipped his two-year-old panama back from his forehead, and pushed it back on again; he made a tapping sound with his foot; tried crossing his knees, found that his foot would hit the other man's, and so uncrossed them again.

Suddenly he turned to his fellow-occupant of the seat with a rat-like showing of his teeth: "Nice weather we're having to-day."

The young man nodded, and turned to his paper.

"Not so hot as it has been."

The young man said "No" in an uninterested tone.

The little man sat silent until the train had passed 125th Street.

"Say," he shot out, "I saw an awfully clever piece of head-work just before I got into the station."

The young men looked up, a momentary flash of surprise crossing his face. He simply said politely, "Did you?"

"Yea," replied the little man. "You know where Vanderbilt Avenue comes into Forty-second Street there? Well, just as I got to the corner, a little boy stepped off the pavement, and there was a big truck coming into Vanderbilt from Forty-second. Fast, y'know, and the boy wasn't looking—just sort of sauntering across the street—"

At this point he gesticulated excitedly, and continued:

"Well, that there truck couldn't ha' stopped if it had wanted to, and here was this boy right in front of it. First thing anybody knew a man makes a bee-line for that boy—beat it right into the street, grabbed him around the waist, and chucked him on the opposite pavement. Right into a lot of people standin' there waiting to get across. Guess they were pretty surprised to have a kid get thrown at them like that, huh?"

Here he stopped, showing his pointed teeth again, and turned to the blonde young man for applause.

"Pretty clever head-work, eh? Seems to me someone ought to give that hero a medal or somethin'. Seems to me he ought to get somethin' for savin' a kid's life like that. If he'd been hurt himself, people would 'a noticed him, but as it was, he was runnin' so fast

to get the kid, he just kept right on, and got lost in the crowd. Pretty clever head-work, I'll say!"

He shook his head a little in admiration, and as the young man simply nodded, thrummed his knee with his fingers. Two or three times he was about to speak again, thought better of it, and was silent until the train reached Portchester.

As the young man folded his paper and rose to leave the car, the other said: "Y'know, I keep thinking of how brave that man was. I haven't got over it yet."

The young man looked down at him with a smile.

"No," he replied slowly, "I shouldn't think you would. I saw you do it myself."



Observation in the Vulgar Manner on a Familiar Species

By Basil Thompson

Skunk. (Webster Unabridged): An American carnivorous animal, allied to the weasel and badger, which ejects to a great distance, when irritated or alarmed, an intensely fetid and offensive fluid.

A TROMBONE player is no mean lot
Neither is a split nosed pug.
I've seen good men within bank cages
And damned good men in the jug—
A downright cad can't be all bad
So long as he isn't too smug.

It's the smug fellows that I can't see,
With a better-than-thou-my-dear
Look upon their blank dull faces,
The boys that go about with a sneer—
But a yegg or a teller is a right enough fellow,
Or the lad with a cauliflower ear.

Now, a praying parson is not to be despised,
Neither is a conscientious drunk.
I've seen stout lads behind glove counters
And stouter lads heaving a trunk—
There's the man we rate a hog, a jackass, or a dog,
But the smug man is just a skunk.



A Certain Something Precious

By Burton Kline

I

IN appearance their room partly answered to its ambitious title. Little enough they had paid for the paper on the walls, but it was merry and saucy and so were the prints that hung against it. Georgia had found them, in old magazines devoted to art: copies of Le Brun, of Reynolds, and Watts, and a drawing of the Water Tower at Lucerne, which she hoped one day to see, in company with *him*.

Furniture in the same key offered comfort to two. At the windows snowy curtains and cretonnes of lively hue hid the leaden gray paint of the frames. Together they had decked it out and given its features their note of reckless mirth. If they happened not to be laughing at the moment of entry, they always laughed when the impertinent room flashed them its furtive welcome at the touch of a light.

On this particular evening, as they entered, Teddy struck an impatient match without fumbling, as usual, for a switch, which was, as he said, "as hard to find as a million."

"But Teddy! So soon? You're insulting our only neighbors—the stars."

"It's so I can find *you*. You know how often you mislay yourself."

"But I could have made a little noise like—like me."

"But you would have moved. I know you."

Certainly she made sound at that, in the music of laughter, as she watched him light his way with the match to the button under the shade of the little lamp on the table.

At the click of it, and at her flashing

at him out of the darkness, he held out his arms, and she, slipping aside the parcels in her arms, waded shoulder deep into his embrace.

"And yet you could ask why I wanted the light!"

"But I'd have had the kiss just the same."

"I know; but I'd have had to hunt for it."

"But you'd have heard me. I make nice little noises. You've said so yourself. 'Like birds in the morning.' Only . . . you never hear those birds. I have to hear them all alone. Teddy, Teddy!" A pause. . . . "How long must it be, I wonder?" . . .

She drew back her head a few inches to focus her brown eyes upon his blue ones.

"Tomorrow! Tonight! Now! Whenever you say! The minute I can get my foot out of the trap!"

For a moment she treated herself to a sight of his earnestness, to the sound of his words, and then again her bright curls crushed themselves against his shoulder.

"I can wait," she said softly. "It's not that I'm complaining. It isn't that I doubt you, dear. But oh—when we can hear the birds together! . . . And you'll let me make little sounds, too, in the dark, won't you? And let me run away from you round the table, till I let you catch me? I'll make a few sounds now, so you'll be sure to recognize them."

And she did.

"Do you like them?"

She looked up at him and gave a little cry of more serious import.

His eyes were moist.

"Oh!"

She kissed him eagerly.

"Teddy, I didn't mean to complain. You know that, don't you?"

The young fellow's lips quivered in the effort of finding words.

"I know that, dearest! And I oughtn't to make you complain. . . . Make all the little chirrupings you please. And then don't complain if I light the light. I can't bear to see you wasted in the dark. When life is so short, and we're apart so much, I can't see enough of you. The very sight of you feeds me."

"Feeds you! Good gracious! That calls me to duty!"

She made a brave move to be free of him. "But you must be starving! I'm a brute! I never once thought!"

"Oh, dear, no, Georgia! Let's sit down. No supper till you've rested. You must be tired to death. A long walk this afternoon. I'm sure you're dead."

"Thanks, dear. But no!"

She had flown before he could stay her.

At a safe distance she put her arms akimbo and lectured him severely. "You know you're starving. I know it well, because I'm starving myself."

She laid her head critically on one side, studied him, and parenthetically commented, "Handsome thing!" and ran on, "I'd starve to death every day of my life for such an afternoon, with you! Wasn't it wonderful! Spring!"

She waved a hand toward the window. "Spring out there." A wave over the room. "Spring in here. And—" touching her heart—"Spring here, too!"

He could only stride toward her.

"Well," she submitted, "just this one more. Till after supper. Then will you read to me? The new book? Please?"

For a little space, their hands clasped, they held each other off at the doubled length of their arms and approved each other.

And again her eye scanned the features of a face manly, breezy, candid

and frank. Once again she reviewed his slender, athletic figure, and brought her admiration to rest on his steady, blue-eyed gaze.

And again the young man gave himself up to the spell of her rare combination of bright golden hair and an eye of deep and velvety brown; an eye timid and slyly merry, and yet with a courage all its own; a witty eye, an eye that commanded admiration chiefly because it seemed itself always to be admiring something. There, too, were the delicate tint to her cheeks and the soft white of her throat, which not even hours of drudgery indoors had dimmed or dulled. Above all, she had manner, the inimitable air; a girl by some wanton freak of fortune born far from the world that belonged to her.

"Hungry?" she ended the tableau.

"Yes, for you!" He made a vain bid for a valedictory embrace. "Very well; I'm coming along. And I don't care how much I get in the way."

"Neither do I," she agreed, and led him trailing into the tiny kitchen where she conjured her own breakfasts and sometimes a bit of supper.

II

IN half an hour a broiler sprawled before them, with other notable dainties, "and you'll have figs and cream for dessert," she promised him.

"This, if you please, for my dessert!" But she foiled the choice he boldly indicated.

"Oh, then you can love me, as a cook?"

"Georgia!"

"But you never ask me if I love you! It's fully an hour since the last time you asked me."

"Love me?"

"Oh—" She so wanted to prolong his imaginary suspense, and had courage to stretch it so briefly.

"I know you love me, dearest." He swept his free arm over the room, and ended the gesture over their ended little supper. "This makes me sure. This answers me. I've been sure from the

very minute I found you. What a beautiful beginning!"

"Ah!"

"I like to go over and over it. Don't you?"

(One of Georgia's little "sounds.")

"We came into the car from opposite ends. Remember?"

(An excited nod.)

"And I looked over the crowd—"

"To see if there were any pretty flirts."

"And I saw a pretty—a lovely—girl. And I glanced at you twice. And then I took another look. And then I looked and looked. And waited for you to turn your head and catch me looking—just to see how you would take my stare. And you tossed your head."

"At first."

"But I looked away in a hurry. Purposely to show you I wasn't a common cad, as you supposed. And then I looked at you only when you were looking away, out of the window in the darkness."

"But do you know what I was looking at 'out of the window'? I was looking at your reflection in the glass."

She hid her face on his shoulder.

"Little witch!"

"But I glanced at you sometimes—right at you!"

"Such a little! But that brave, calm eye! And the wonderful good taste of you. I wondered how you came to be there and not behind a chauffeur on the Avenue, where you belong. Much more than sister does. And where I'm going to put you! I wondered that night how a creature so lovely and wonderful came to be in that crowd. I felt obliged to protect you. I knew then I had to take you and place you where you ought to be. And I measured my glances, I remember, and cut them short, so that if you surprised me in one of them you'd know it was respect, and understanding, and not just a cheap sport trying to pick up a girl. And now I think you understand."

(Again the ecstatic cry.)

"And you let me look more often."

(An emphatic nod.)

"And you looked at me a weeny bit oftener."

(A more grudging nod.)

"And the crowd in the car began to thin out, and we had each other more to ourselves. Remember?"

(A nod of agreement.)

"And I began to think how empty the car—the whole world—would be when you got out. I wondered if you would remember me for more than a minute. Because I knew that, for at least a minute, we had approved each other. You had let me have my glances. It was that much, anyway. Did you think of me at all?"

(A nod.)

"But what did you think?"

"I thought you were—well, what they call a gentleman. But you weren't a snob. You didn't presume. And . . . and I was afraid you'd get off the car. And I . . . I wondered if you'd think of me the minute I had passed out of sight. And I thought of life, and of how close one sometimes comes to a bright promise and never grasps it."

"Georgia! Dear, I'm so glad I had the courage to come over to your seat the instant that fat woman got up from beside you. I was so deathly afraid you'd misunderstand. Or call the conductor! I didn't want you to think I was . . . that kind. And what a thrill when you understood! In a single flash, then, I knew you. I knew you had sense and understanding. Even if you meant never to see me again, you meant not to hurt me then; you were willing at least to try a moment's experiment. You trusted! And I knew it was because you were confident you could handle me if need be. And what did you think?"

"I think . . . I think I wanted to hear the sound of your voice. That would have told me. It always does."

"Precisely what I wanted of you! Only you heard mine first."

"Of course! You said, 'Have you had a tiresome day?' It was just what I expected, and wanted. The first word you uttered was a word of sympathy. It was instinctive."

"I really never said that before."

They laughed.

"And oh, that long ride further! How glad I was it was a long line! I wanted before you got off to make you sure I was a decent chap."

"And I . . . I rode beyond my stop." Georgia confessed it with a drooping head.

"And I'd forgotten where I lived!" Teddy's laughter grew exultant. "I wanted to build the beginnings of an acquaintanceship while there was time. Because . . . oh, your voice, your eyes, your dear self! I couldn't let them pass out of my knowledge for lack of a little courage. For that it was worth while risking a snub. You kept me where I belonged, too!"

"I had no need to."

"We were just sensible people, or rather as people would be if they *were* sensible. We trusted. It seemed such a fine thing in this crummy old world. We were just two people so nearly in tune that we knew it right away. And we weren't afraid to acknowledge the fact. And we've known it ever since."

Georgia raised a hand to touch his cheek; and in her quiet voice that was always, even in her playful moments, a little grave, she said, "Known it ever since? Oh, haven't we!"

He felt her shudder lightly.

"Georgia! This—Here where we—Forgive me, Georgia! But just because you shrink from the thought, I know you love me, more than I understand. Infinitely more than I deserve. It's nothing but an outrage for circumstance to keep us in this state! It's all my fault. I'm a hound to let you sacrifice so much that is fine and dear to you. I'm nothing but a cad not to have torn through everything to set you right. Even though mother is such a frightful bear. Let's—Tomorrow, Georgia, let's have it done. Will you?"

"But your mother, Teddy? How will you take care of us both?"

"Let the Deacon take care of her. Why shouldn't he, with his money!"

"Perhaps he doesn't know . . . know her situation."

"He ought to know! He ought to find out! Hell of a son-in-law he is! It's his part to take her on. I've sacrificed myself to her; I'm not going to sacrifice you!"

"She sacrificed for your sake, Teddy. She must have pinched while you were at college."

"And never lets me hear the last of it! I won't stand it. She no longer counts. Not against you."

"But it will be soon, Teddy."

"The minute I get the next raise. It can't be long. They promised it."

"I can wait. I don't mind. Of course you know I'm as . . . as fussy as your mother, when it comes to that. Just the minute we can, I'd really like things made plain. Between us two it doesn't matter—"

"It's glorious! Our trust."

"Only, Teddy, it's so frail. It falls to pieces the minute an outsider looks in. I don't mind for ourselves. We do trust one another. But after all, we've got to accept the world we live in. But oh—"

She cuddled against him, in physical expression of her sense of security.

"To escape that awful monotony, and the dangers, and the insults of that life! To have found my dear Teddy to protect me! And as long as this seems the only way not to lose each other in these huge crowds—"

She sighed submission. "We'll wait a little while longer. Then people's notions—our own notions—can be satisfied."

"People's notions! What a lot of rottenness is covered by 'people's notions'! See how you and I trust each other. And then look at my poor sister."

"Hush, dear."

"I mean it. My poor sister! If any woman was sold—!"

"Please, Teddy."

"She sold herself!"

"Teddy, don't!"

"I was wrong. Poor Ethel was a sheep. Mother sold her."

"Teddy, Teddy, you mustn't!"

"And poor Ethel pays the price. God knows she isn't happy. Well fed, well

clothed, servants, motors, and"—he ended passionately—"not a friend in the world! Except me. . . . There isn't a woman in the world that doesn't make her jealous. She's told me. . . ."

"Poor dear!"

"If she were like mother, she wouldn't stand it. Maybe she won't as it is. Pood Dad died of it all. . . . And who's the gainer by the bargain! Mother made the deal, and sister pays the price." A burst of bitter laughter finished the tirade. "Poor Ethel, she looks—"

"She looks hungry, Teddy. Hungry, like all the rest of us. Hasn't her husband a spark of love for her?"

"He's none to spare from himself. Even he is 'hungry'! He—he wants to move from the Drive to the Avenue. He wants to 'know people'!" Another laugh. . . .

"Isn't it funny, Teddy! There's something we all want—everyone of us—something that money won't buy—that scheming won't bring—something—something precious. So few ever find it. It can't be found by hunting. It just happens."

"You've hit it exactly, Georgia! . . . Poor mother! If she'd only be hungry for the right things! Even Perry has shoved her out. He couldn't stand her. Oh, I know you think it's awful of me to talk as I do. A mother's claims are sacred. But it's awful when they're presented by an embittered woman without a—"

"Careful, Teddy."

He kissed her. "'Something precious.' It's happened to us, hasn't it, dear?—only in this funny way. But even so, aren't we lucky?"

"Aren't we, Teddy! . . . Oh, that awful loneliness. That lodging-house. Those leering men. The evening after evening in my room alone, to keep away from them. Nothing to do but work, but wait on fussy and insulting women. And the other poor girls there, too! I often think of them. At night. And wonder. Poor dears!"

Georgia had taken to swaying gently against his shoulder. "There's slavery

yet, Teddy. They've never done away with it. It's only human to want to ease up on the chains. And some of them don't—don't find the best way."

They were silent for a while. And then Georgia:

"Sometimes, Teddy, I'm afraid—afraid I've presumed on my good luck."

"Good heavens, what do you mean!"

"I mean, if only it—it lasts."

"'Lasts'? Why, Georgia! What is it?"

"Nothing, dear. Except at times this place—this dear little place, seems just like a . . . like a . . . what do they say? . . . like a cockleshell. Whatever that is, I know what it means."

"Oh, now I know!" Teddy exulted over his gathering sophistication. "You need a good cry. I've heard of them. And might have known. You're tired. Come on, right here in my arms, where you'll always have them."

She answered the invitation of the arms, but she said, "There's no puffing it away, Teddy. Some day you're going to be a big man. And if this thing happens not to be understood—"

"Nothing can hurt me—but you, dear."

"Catch me at that!"

"It's I who have hurt you."

"Oh, never!"

"It's true. I've been a cad, a weakling, the merest boy. I ought to have started things right from the beginning. I ought to have snapped my fingers in mother's face."

"Teddy! The only times when I feel uneasy are when you talk like that."

He had risen and was stirring restlessly about. "I don't care. She must shift for herself. Other women do. It's nothing short of criminal for one woman to wreck the life of another. She's wrecked one already. She shan't do it to you."

"But she may not approve of me."

"So much the worse for her! Come on, Georgia. Let's have it over tomorrow. Let's knock off the chains. What do you say, dear?"

Being near her, he placed his arm

about her shoulders and tilted her head and kissed her brow.

"What do you say, dearest?"

"Yes," she said.

Whereupon there was a knock at the door.

III

IN the second of silence that ensued Theodore's eyes wore only the wry look of a sheepish boy upon a fearful summons. Georgia heard the knock of many imaginings. The fingers that strayed to her lips were cold and trembling as Teddy stalked to the door and swung it open.

His mother entered. Behind her entered his sister Ethel and her husband Perry.

Mrs. Gardner first took inventory of the room, of the *mise-en-scène*. She then condescended a swift glance at Georgia, not without its tinge of feminine curiosity. Finally her gaze came to a long rest upon Teddy, who, this while, was saying:

"Why, mother! Indeed—this is unexpected."

"Going into the movies, I see, Teddy! I hope we're not spoiling the rehearsal. I don't"—Mrs. Gardner glanced about in sarcasm—"believe I see the camera, however."

Mrs. Gardner here sat down on the chest that served as a window-seat.

Georgia, on her part, still stood, steadily now, even coolly and with a kind of far-away detachment, because steeled by many dreaded "rehearsals" of fancy, not for the movies but for just this contingency. And being so steeled, her eyes were able to flash to Teddy the sad comment. "You see?"

"Movies, mother?" Teddy tried nervously to organize some hasty means of defence, of protection. "You're joking! I—I'm glad you've—you've come. It gives me the opportunity to present—Allow me—"

He moved to Georgia's side. "Allow me to present Georgiana. My wife."

Mrs. Gardner's eyes, also, said what her lips could not.

"How do you do, Mrs. Gordon?"

Georgia came forward. "Teddy and I are not yet married. But he has asked me, and I love him." She was speaking very quietly. And ventured to add, "I hope you will let me like you, too."

Son-in-law Perry had taken up a defensive position behind cover of a high-backed chair, and relieved his breathy, and quite unexpected, agitation with fanning of his round face with his hat. Ethel, her eyes moving from the floor to the door and back again, could never afterward have given a description of her actions or her thoughts. Only Mrs. Gardner was completely herself. Directly enough she said to her son:

"Let's come to the point. How long has this business been going on? Answer me. Though," she added before the son could break in with his indignation, "that doesn't matter. The question is, How soon can you get out of this? How much rent do you owe? Your landlady looks like a shark. I'll pay her, nevertheless. How many of these things are really yours? I'll take them off your hands. You've got the Gardner taste, I see!"

"The Georgia taste, if you please," Teddy said quietly.

His mother had risen, as if it were all over.

"Get your hat, Theodore. I suppose this must be forgiven. In *you*," she shot out bitterly. "You're young."

She was moving toward the door, a refractory glove absorbing whatever agitation she could not control.

"Come along. We're tired."

From the first glance, Mrs. Gardner had turned her back upon Georgia.

"I fear, mother," Teddy was saying as stiffly as he could, "you will have to excuse me."

"I don't believe I understand?"

"I'm staying here. With Georgia."

The mother faced about sharply and fixed him with her dark eye. "I've made allowances for you, my son. You have the excuse of youth in your own case." She flashed a stare at Georgia. "But I can't keep it up forever. Come with me. Besides—"

In spite of herself Mrs. Gardner be-

gan to be feminine. "Besides, this is dreadful! Dreadful!" And she was obliged to press her handkerchief—to her nose.

"Let it be as you say, mother. You are entitled to your opinion. Whatever opinion you please. Good evening. Good evening, all of you. I am not quite a child"—fatal opening to argument.

"That's just what you are!" That she had not been altogether baffled Mrs. Gardner was femininely quick to perceive. She sank down again on the seat and began to talk. "This is dreadful!" she kept repeating, till further ideas should come.

They all began to talk, or to murmur, by way of relief; began to admonish each other, though none of them knew how to get forward.

"Dreadful it is!" Teddy caught up his mother's phrase. "Dreadful of you!" He was shaking with mortification, with fear for Georgiana, and anger, with all the blaze of things that always flared up in him before the problem of his mother.

"Please, Teddy!" Georgia sought to stay him.

He was not to be halted.

Turning to her he laughed harshly, and the words sputtered from his lips:

"Now you understand, Georgia, what I was too decent to tell you! Why I couldn't marry and take a wife home!"

Even brother-in-law Perry grinned at the shot, and Ethel herself bore calmly enough her mother's indignant groan. Only Georgia was collected.

At the instant of their invasion she knew that all this bubble world about her had burst and become a memory. The moment they entered nothing was left her, nothing except patience and pity for a footless distress to them all. A fragrant recollection—of Teddy—nothing more.

Out of her great hurt Georgia ventured to help them cut it short. "I don't believe, Mrs. Gordon—" she started to say, but faltered before the hopeless prospect of explanation to such a woman.

"'Gordon'?" the mother sniffed. "Gardner is my name," she snapped. And instantly brightened. Teddy had not taken this affair seriously enough after all to have revealed his real name!

"Gardner? Is *that* his name?" Georgia accepted this correction with eyes that wandered toward Teddy.

What they were saying to him Teddy preferred not to know just then. He kept his gaze averted, but the blood seemed ready to burst from his face in the violence of his blushing. So he missed the "Oh" of comprehension, framing on her lips, which she stifled with her hands. Four of the faces were turned toward the floor. On those of Mrs. Gardner and Perry the girl detected a smile. For a moment the room was intensely still. Then Teddy turned and looked at her.

And suddenly Georgia, as she looked back at him, saw him again. It was as if he were there once more. Before her stood someone who reminded her of Teddy. She was pale and she tottered as she walked. But she went to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Don't mind," she soothed him. "I think I know why you did it. Gave me the—the other name," she did him the honor to say for him. "It was out of respect to your mother, after all. And you trusted me to understand later on."

Here Georgia turned briskly to the mother. Since it was over, there was nothing to do but finish.

"Mrs. Gardner," Georgia pronounced the name very distinctly, "I don't believe you will ever understand—"

"'Understand'!" Mrs. Gardner cut her short and laughed outright. "Sounds like a silly novel, where someone is never 'understood'!"

"Georgia!" Teddy put out an arm, which the girl avoided. "Don't pay any heed to the woman. *We* understand. What matters else!"

"I perfectly understand"—Mrs. Gardner weighed the words before letting them fall—"a sordid shame when I see it!"

"Mother!" The son rushed upon her,

his voice in a tremble, his clenched hands upraised.

"I tell you," he sputtered helplessly, "I'm not nearly good enough—you're not half good enough, to stand in the presence of that dear girl! You're not fit to be in her presence. Not till you've learned things that will never enter your head. It's a hard thing for a son to say, but you've always left me to wish I had a mother—a real mother. Once again let me wish you all good evening. I have a very great deal to say to Georgia. I have a great deal to explain to my wife. And she—she has a great deal to forgive."

"Then it's true!" Mrs. Gardner deigned to turn with her question. "She's really snared you in and got you fast!"

"No, madam. It has not yet come to that."

There Mrs. Gardner switched about and confronted Georgia utterly.

"To *that*!" she laughed. "Why *hasn't* it come to that? That's the question!"

"Because I couldn't afford it!" Teddy broke in upon her more hotly still. "And support you at the same time! Georgia!" he held out arms that implored. "After this we needn't delay. There's no more obligation now. We go our way. Dearest!" He moved toward her. "Can you ever forgive—!"

"Don't, Teddy, don't!" his sister's whisper was barely audible.

"Mother!" the son persisted, above even Georgia's effort to close his lips. "Mother, it's a hard thing to say, but you make me say it. I never was snared away from you. I escaped from you!"

He wrung his hands, still so impotently a boy, groping for a sudden maturity, a sudden mastery; and still greater follies might have issued out of his helplessness, but that here Perry de Armand rose magnificently to still the troubled waters.

"Teddy, Teddy! My boy!" He laid a soothing hand on Theodore's arm. "Come away. Calm down. You're all worked up. I—I was young myself.

I know how it is. But these things never work. This young lady is perhaps estimable, as you say. But she doesn't see. She doesn't understand."

"Oh, doesn't she!" Teddy whisked away. "Well, I understand for her. I don't see how she can possibly want me now, with all of you into the bargain!"

Georgia warned him: "Teddy, please!"

"Oh, this is rotten!" the young man raved on, now quite beside himself. "And I've been rottenest of all! Georgia, I humbly, humbly beg your forgiveness for it all. Put on your hat. It's we who leave."

Georgia neglected his invitation. She rather gazed about, as if making certain of the reality of what had happened. Tolerably sure, such a little while before, of the security of her little world, she was rather startled to find herself so quickly at home amid its ruins.

Suddenly she came before Mrs. Gardner, so that she could not be longer ignored, meaning to have it over, and little aware of what was in store for her.

IV

"MADAM, I have been fond—very fond—of your son. I have given up a great deal for him. I doubt if you would ever believe how much. However, it would seem that he doesn't belong with me. I never quite understood the other claims upon him. And I don't believe we could be happy . . . could be quite the same to each other . . . after this. If you want him, take him with you."

Condescension of such a nature it was not in the mother to endure.

"Take him with me!" she snapped back. "Ah, yes! Stained and dishonored!"

"O-oh!" Georgia recoiled as if struck. "You—you *can't* mean that!"

She put her hands protectively to her face and retreated, till a wall offered her something of support. Even Ethel breathed a protest at that.

Teddy, for the second that he

watched this, was stricken sick and dumb. In his recovery he made the distance from stupefaction to passion in a single leap.

"Mother!" he rushed upon the obdurate woman again. "Do you want me to—to strike you? I have all I can do to prevent it. Go! Or, no. You'll wait and hear something. I tell you there isn't a single wrong you haven't done to Ethel and me. Ethel knows. Look at her pale cheeks. Look at her. *She* knows. You, mother, with your petty ambitions! They've lost you everything worth while. Who of us loves you!"

The outburst ended in a torrent of laughter.

Ethel had wilted completely into confusion, with blushing and visible misgivings as to the possibility of life with her Perry after that.

Yet who can presage the inspirations of the stupid! Perry de Armand strode magnificently to the side of his wife.

"The boy is mad," he whispered loudly. "We must get him out of this."

He then stalked to Teddy. "Theodore, my boy, we must all have time to think this over. Of course Miss Georgiana will require some compensation for her . . . her annoyance; though I trust she will be reasonable, and content with a . . . a single advance. You know"—he calmly moved upon Georgia—"I've thought of a little opportunity in my business for Theodore, and I'd like to take him with me, to talk it over."

The outrage put Theodore beside himself. "I don't want your opportunity. I won't have it. I want nothing from you but the apology you owe us for your rotten suspicions. My God! You don't know Georgia! You no more see her than you can see a ghost. But Georgia, dear—"

It was a bit too much Georgia for Brother de Armand, and he held up a staying hand. "Oh, my boy, we understand, *we* understand. Fiery youth, and all that sort of thing. I rather admire it. Young love, if you'd rather put it

that way. I was young myself once upon a time."

Perry brightened. He felt he was getting a genuine de Armand grasp of this difficult situation. In any tight corner, temporize, was his motto. "I'm sure Miss Georgiana will give our Theodore a chance to get on his feet first of all. A little delay first, so that we may see how we are getting on, and all that sort of thing. I'm sure that's fair."

Georgia scarcely had heard.

"Stained and dishonored."

Mrs. Gardner's words had crushed her frail world.

From the moment of their utterance Georgia had felt removed from them all, from Teddy as well. After all it was he who, though with innocent blundering, had trapped her where such a blow might fall. Along with her fairy world he, too, had sunk.

Yet bravely, even with pride, she turned her gaze to Perry. In her eyes was light of all the little diplomacies she had employed in steering her difficult course; the walks she and Teddy had taken, not for his health after all, but to keep the roses in her own cheeks and her charm fresh to his eyes; the everlasting vigil she had kept to shut out the ever-lurking touch of vulgarity; the distance she had ever to keep between herself and him; the effort of mind and speech to maintain their relationship on the plane that her nature required.

"Yes, Mr. ———, I don't believe I heard your name," she answered Perry. And for all her smile, the sarcasm would escape her.

"No matter," she smiled more broadly at Perry's confusion. "It will be kind of you to give Mr. Gardner an opportunity."

At "Mr. Gardner" Teddy stared.

"Kind of you to give Mr. Gardner an opportunity," the even, musical voice went on in its distant tone. "He deserves it. As for me, nothing is needed. Except that I too may want a little time . . . to think things over. I

like your plan." Again the sarcasm was not to be resisted.

Perry, when he learned he was to be let off without a single payment of money, was all in a fever to have things over.

"Yes . . . yes," he stammered. "It's been a great pleasure to meet you, I'm sure. Perhaps we may—" He almost finished it "see you again some time," but caught himself before it was too late.

Georgia watched him set up a hunt for his hat.

Teddy, meanwhile, was studying Georgia curiously.

"I don't see—" he tried to grope his way to comprehension of a situation which everyone except himself appeared to understand. "'See if this is lasting'?"

He turned to Perry. "We know that well enough now. Georgia—"

He turned back to her.

Never had her beauty seemed to him what it was then. He put out his hand, toward its familiar rest about her waist. But she moved away. The brown eyes, turned toward the ceiling as she tilted her head against the wall, filled slowly. Then they closed.

"Georgia! If this job of Perry's—Then we can go ahead right away!"

Her head was rocking from side to side against the wall; her arms hung limply down.

"But Georgia! Your Teddy! Has something—?"

She opened her eyes at him and said, "Surely you must—'understand'," and laughed lightly at the silly word.

Even before he answered, "You mean . . . everything . . . is spoiled?" he knew the fact confirmed him.

He rather stood there, with the word "spoiled" on his lips, studying this enigma of the new and distant Georgia. It may be that his forehead felt cold and his lips dry. It may be that he was aware his breath had failed him. Other physical presentments of a sense of overwhelming loss may have obtruded on his notice. He only stood and gazed at Georgia. And he chiefly understood that "something which was precious"—the utter faith of a girl—had passed out of the world.

Suddenly the son made for the seat where his mother still sat, smiling her smile. "This is your work! You—" . . .

After a time Perry and Ethel contrived to subdue him. When the outbreak had been quieted, Georgiana, having seen it through, saw its crestfallen actors out of the room. Teddy she pushed, though gently, through the door. There was no withstanding the imperious girl.

In the night there came to her something more precious than faith—which is forgiveness. The moment his footsteps had died away on the stairs she was frantically calling him back to her. Yet who was Georgia, to know whether he would care or dare to knock at her door again? They had left her alone with the night.

She turned back into the room and put out the lamp on the table, and went to the window. In the narrow little alley of sky overhead a few of her "neighbors," the stars, peered down at her.

Suddenly she flung herself upon the floor, face downward, her body rocking gently. "Oh, my love—my love!" she cried.



Brotherhood

By Reese Reeds

FROM childhood they had played together, fought together; they had enjoyed their pleasures mutually, had combined forces to battle their individual difficulties. They had grown to manhood and were even now in their early thirties; still they remained inseparable. They were confirmed celibates. Each had often sworn that the companionship of his brother was more to him than love of maid could ever be. Each had sacrificed for the other innumerable times, and ever sought to do so. Truly, they were brothers.

The community pointed them out with pride as the modern version of Damon and Pythias. The bond must be even stronger, they argued, because of the tie of blood. Throughout the locality, their names were predominant in children's games; their virtues were held exemplary in the minds of youth; their unselfish devotion was a comfort to the aged.

Spectacular events in which each brother had endangered his life to save that of the other had caused the world to learn of this wonderful attachment. The papers broadcast it in their Sunday supplements. They compared and contrasted great friendships in history and myth. And now, they reasoned, perhaps this was to be another such. A reader of the sheet would have surmised it.

Thus, far and wide, these brothers came to be regarded as superhuman and were highly esteemed. Yea, and in their own locality, one could almost say—reverenced.

Then, one day—the impossible hap-

pened. The younger brother was found—murdered—his skull crushed terribly. A bloody hammer lay nearby. The elder brother was notified immediately. He astounded his informers by saying, "I killed him." He cursed continually, but would say nothing further concerning the crime. The dazed sheriff led him away.

Speculation as to the cause ran rife among the villagers. All agreed that the elder brother must have been aggravated beyond human understanding. There must be something of which they had never dreamed; something, perhaps, they would never know. It might even be beyond their mental grasp, for what else could cause such a woeful ending to this supernatural devotion.

The prisoner himself kept a steadfast silence as to the motive. Only at the mention of his brother's name, a terrible passion would possess him. Vile invectives and curses would pour from his lips. Even the guard shuddered at this blasphemy.

The day set for the trial approached. The excitement became intense. Conflicting opinions governed the populace. Everyone had a presentiment that his curiosity would be satisfied at the trial.

The day came. Hours before the time set the courtroom was crowded. Order could hardly be maintained. Finally the jurymen filed in and took their places. The judge arrived. The prisoner was brought forward. A woman fainted. Confusion—and then order again.

Several persons testified. All

vouched for the friendship and love that had existed between the brothers, but not one had the slightest suspicion as to the motive for the crime. Then, amid profound silence the elder brother took the stand. The crowd, as a unit, leaned slightly forward—expectantly. The solution was at hand. They would learn the truth.

The attorney asked him the customary questions. Then, abruptly,

"Why did you kill your brother?"

"Your honor," shouted the lawyer for the defendant, "I object—"

But—the prisoner cut him short, and answered defiantly, "Well, he wuz trimmin' his nails with my razor. Ain't that enough?"

He was adjudged insane and sent to a sanitarium. In due time he was released; whereupon, he returned home and killed his father.



Precept Upon Precept

By Peter Kerrigan

HAPPINESS doesn't take up much space in the world. A man can almost always get his arms around it.



BEAUTIFUL women have this trait in common: their taste for men always borders on the ridiculous.



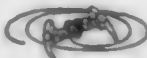
IT'S not for the fact itself that a virtuous man is disliked—it's because he insists that all other men stay bad in order that he may appear different.



A WICKED woman gets as much fun out of being good as a good man does in being wicked.



ONE man sent her candy, and one sent her flowers and one wrote poems for her; but she liked best of all the man who sent her a mirror.



LOVE is a man's way of subjugating woman. Marriage is her revenge.





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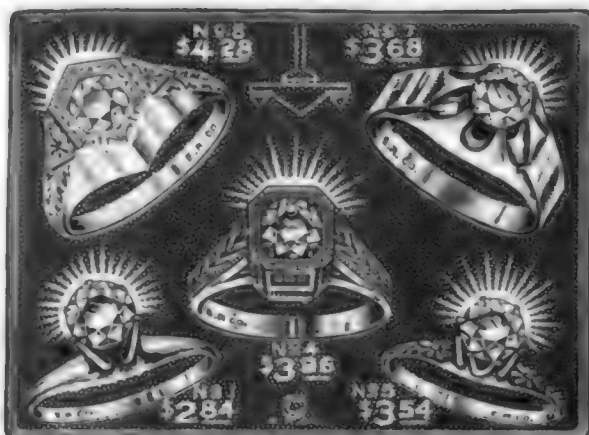
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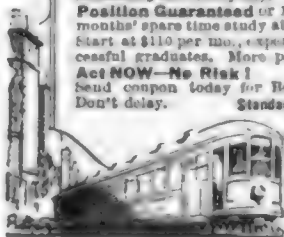
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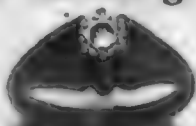
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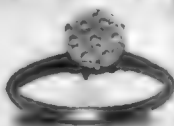
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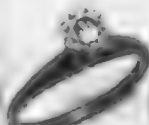


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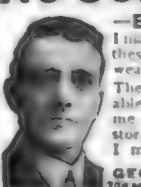
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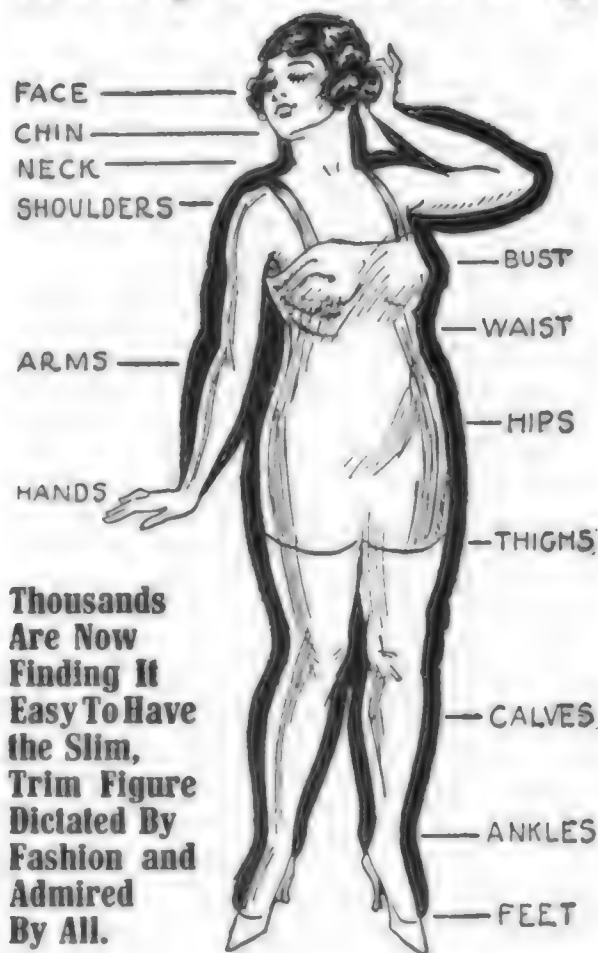
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Generous Sample FREE

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This free offer is good for only a short time, so send me your name and address on the coupon below or a post card, and I will see that the generous sample and booklet are mailed immediately under plain wrapper postpaid. Do not try to get Rid-O-Fat at drug stores as it is distributed only direct from my laboratory to you—remember this is a short time offer and send your name at once. H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories, 1504 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

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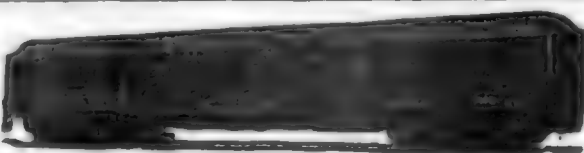
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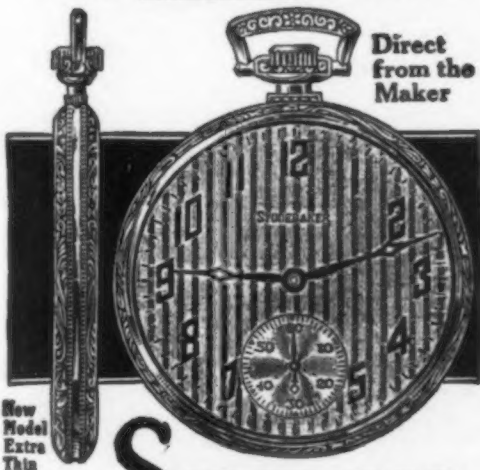
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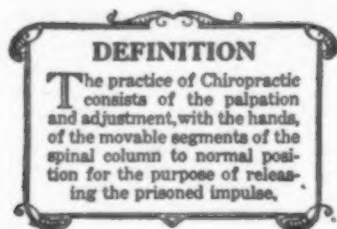
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